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# Leo Strauss: Gerhard Krüger Correspondence 1928–1962

## 1

Berlin, 24 September 1928.  
[postcard]

Dear Dr. Krüger!<sup>1</sup>

Since the second copy of my work is still with my superior, I must turn to you and sincerely request that you return the copy in your possession to me soon. In order to avoid surprises I need to review the whole thing again carefully. Allow me to remind you of your promise to tell me candidly and in detail what you think of my claims.

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Translated by Jerome Veith, Anna Schmidt, and Susan M. Shell (All insertions in square brackets are our own or those of the editors, Heinrich and Wiebke Meier. We have unified the date format of the letters and, for the sake of clarity, silently extended initials to full names. –Tr)

With distinguished regards,  
Yours humbly,  
L. Strauss

my address:  
Berlin W 30  
Motzstrasse 35a  
c/o Arend.

2

Berlin W 30, 28 November 1929.  
Bayerischer Platz #3.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

I had promised to send you the typescript of my work immediately upon arriving in Berlin. When I arrived, the first galleys were waiting for me. So I told myself that I would wait until the whole thing was printed. Now that time has come. I am thus sending you the complete galleys. Of course, you can get a regular copy once the book appears, but it will still take some time until it is published. The galleys are missing an appendix, but it only contains philological material (source citations).

I would be very happy if you went through the trouble to share with me your overall judgment and—especially—your concrete concerns. Particularly, what do you think of the attempt to understand the Enlightenment in terms of Epicurus, or in contradistinction to him [von Epikur aus, bzw. in Abhebung gegen ihn, zu verstehen]? Your lecture on Hume has clearly shown me the limits of this attempt. But doesn't one fail to understand most important elements of the Enlightenment in exclusively taking one's bearings from the will to "autonomy"? I would very much like to debate with you this question of the correct approach to interpreting the Enlightenment.

Are you familiar with Tetens<sup>2</sup> critique of the beatitudes? It reminds me very much of Kant's, which I learned about from your work. Felix Günther<sup>3</sup>—a student of Lamprecht's<sup>4</sup>—has written on Tetens' "The Science of the Human Being: A Contribution to German Intellectual Life in the Age of Rationalism" (Gotha, 1907). You can find some interesting information in the book. I assume you are not familiar with it.

Greetings to you, and please send my greetings to your wife,

Cordially,  
Leo Strauss

### 3

Berlin, 7 January 1930.  
Bayrischer Platz 3.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

I would like to thank you today already for your letter that will be of great help in channeling my general discontent with my work into concrete doubts and into changes in my previous way of questioning. Moreover, I would already now like to give you some responses to your critique, responses that I can state more clearly than in the work itself, now that a year has passed since I finished it. By the way, it was my position of employment that forced me to remain silent about certain things in the work, since my supervisor was of the opinion that my primitive interest in answering the question that the Enlightenment had in mind endangered the “objectivity” of the investigation. Not to mention the fact that my society (the Academy for the Science of Judaism) would not have tolerated my atheistic presupposition being openly exposed as the starting point of my inquiry. I resigned myself—to the detriment of the intelligibility of my book. Otherwise, *I* did not lose much in doing this. I do not think that actual research depends all that much upon so-called freedom of thought. So much by way of an apology for the peculiar, *fundamentally* unnecessary trouble that I caused you, as the reader of my book. Now I would like to briefly convey to you the actual core of my reflections—which did not come out clearly enough in my work partly for the reason just mentioned, partly because of that proverbial “helplessness.” What I mean is the question: How was it possible for the Enlightenment to have been *victorious*? The typical view, still held by Franz Rosenzweig,<sup>5</sup> claims that the Enlightenment defeated Scholasticism but not revelation [Offenbarung], the world of the Bible. For me, the critique of miracles serves to indicate the inadequacy of this response: the concept of miracles is biblical, and in the wake of the Enlightenment it has lost its force and truth. (Today it is

an embarrassment; at your convenience, please read Rosenzweig's "Star of Redemption" p. 119ff.<sup>6</sup> Rosenzweig recognized that the problem of miracles is central; and look in what way he was forced to "*interpret*" the Enlightenment critique of miracles in order to be able to affirm the miracle—and what a miracle!) [um das Wunder—und was für ein Wunder!—behaupten zu können.] Yet what has the Enlightenment succeeded in with regard to miracles? It only succeeded in securing itself, i.e. the *already* enlightened human being, against miracles. It created a position that is unattainable for miracles. But a miracle, according to its own meaning, can be experienced as a miracle only on the basis of faith [Glaube]. Thus, the Enlightenment advance is rendered powerless. [Yet] apparently [offenbar] not—as I claim, again by pointing out the fact that belief in miracles has become powerless. No later than at this point it becomes clear that the Enlightenment owes its victory not to scientific refutation of the claims of revealed religion. It owes its victory to a certain *will* that one, with a grain of salt [cum grano salis], may call Epicurean. *This* will does not seem to me to be a legal ground [Rechtsgrund] of the Enlightenment against revealed religion. The indication for this is the fact that the understanding of religion stemming from Epicureanism's basic attitude [Grundgesinnung] is evidently inadequate to anyone who understands a prayer in an even only intellectually anticipatory fashion [der ein Gebet auch nur intellektuell vorgreifend versteht]. In order for the social victory of the Enlightenment—which is not a binding fact—to become a total victory, *another* will had to arise against revealed religion. I see indications of such a will in Macchiavelli, Bruno, and Spinoza (naturally, the "pantheism" of the latter two doesn't count here), its most extreme expression [Darstellung] reached in Nietzsche, and its completion attained in—*Being and Time*; I mean in the interpretation of the *call* of conscience and in the answer given there to the question of *who* is calling. It is only on the basis of Heidegger's Dasein interpretation that an adequate *atheistic* interpretation of the Bible should be possible [dürfte ... möglich sein]. The progress that the critique of religion owes to Heidegger becomes most evident when one confronts Heidegger's view of the relation of "seeing" (θεωρεῖν) and "hearing" with certain statements in Feuerbach's *Essence of Religion*.) Religion will only have been overcome when it can be adequately interpreted atheistically. Thus: the Enlightenment's victory, i.e. the victory of the "scientific worldview"—by which I *only* mean the loss of the possibility of believing in miracles—is defensible only on the basis of a certain *attitude*, not on the basis of this worldview itself.

The general tendency just sketched fits with the distinction between the ancient (Epicurean) critique and the modern critique that aims at social peace. The latter becomes the goal because the point is no longer primarily to get rid of *awful* delusion, but to get rid of delusion, *delusional happiness*, in the interest of establishing *real* happiness. In line with this general tendency, it bears noting that in this turn toward “reality” Nietzsche’s position is also prepared.

I approached the work without any methodological reflections or certainties. Perhaps because I am not fit for reflections beyond a certain limit of abstraction. In this regard, I would simply ask you—and Klein—to help me gain footing. One thing, however, was clear to me: that I *cannot* believe in God. I worked it out this way: there is an *idea Dei innata, omnibus hominibus communis* [innate idea of God, common to all men]; I can give or withhold my assent to this idea; I believed that I had to withhold it; I had to make clear to myself why. I had to justify myself before the forum of the Judaic tradition; and this without any reflections drawn from the philosophy of history, simply because I would not have considered it defensible to surrender out of levity and convenience a cause for which my ancestors had borne everything thinkable. Thus I asked myself: why? The Jewish tradition itself, which designates the heretic simply as the Epicurean, gave me the nearest [nächste] answer. I therefore began to explore the Epicureans and soon gained the conviction that these ancients had hit the nail on the head with their designation: “proximally” [“zunächst und zumeist”] the apostasy was in fact of “Epicurean” provenance. But not always. I tried to gain clarity about the various reasons for atheism; *hence* the seemingly typographical presentation in the first section of my work, and really *not* from some romantic delight in the “richness of life.” The “typology” has its model much more in something like Fr. Buddeus’ listing of the various reasons that lead people into unbelief. I concede to you, of course, that this orientation is no longer defensible on the basis of my presuppositions; also, that certain unbridled formulations concerning Epicureanism as an eternal possibility for human beings are very much in need of reexamination. However, I cannot yet adopt as my own your fundamental theses regarding the exclusively historical [geschichtlich-exklusiv] determination of man.

I wanted to write you a few pages more. But I must now get to bed, and I will certainly not get around to writing in the next few days. I will therefore delay my response to your actual concerns. I will wait until I have in my hands your critique of my work in its entirety.

I hope that this letter, despite its incompleteness, helps a little in your reading of my work.

In thanking you again—especially for getting me the Mendelssohn-reference—I send my greetings to you and your wife.

Yours,  
Leo Strauss

8 January 1930.

I am just today getting around to mailing the letter to you. Since I would like now to continue the investigation, begun in the work that I sent you, in the form of an analysis of Hobbes' anthropology, it would be especially helpful—aside from your comments in general—to know of any concerns you may have about my conception of Hobbes, admittedly only intimated in my work (§4 of the Introduction and pp. 222ff.). If anything strikes you, please make a note of it.

#### 4

Berlin-Neutempelhof, 3 March 1930.  
Hohenzollernkorso 11.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

I have to ask you a favor out of the blue. I heard from Klein that you are giving an Augustine seminar in the winter. I'm planning on coming to Kirchhain in December. Might I give a presentation in your seminar? I'd like to talk about "Enlightenment in the Middle Ages." I would however only treat the Jewish and Islamic development. But given the numerous and important analogies to the Christian development what I'd say would fit within the framework of your seminar. I'm writing you now already because, in order not to get bogged down, I would like to have the obligation of finishing a particular investigation, however loose that obligation may be.

I began my work about a Jewish scholastic—Gersonides—as a pure "work of scholarship," and also because I have to deliver any old works of erudition [irgendwelche Elaborate] to the people who are paying me. But I soon realized that this work can't be carried out so mindlessly, simply because the subject matter is too exciting. It deals with the problem of that moderate (i.e. non-atheistic) Enlightenment about which I learned quite a few things from your work on Kant. Looked at superficially, the

situation in the Jewish-Arabic Middle Ages is similar to that of the eighteenth century: prevalence of belief in providence, of belief in a benevolent God over belief in a God who calls one to account, and *therefore* belief in the sufficiency of reason. Upon closer inspection, however, there are significant differences. In the eighteenth century, primacy of morality (veneration of Socrates); in the Middle Ages, primacy of theory. In the eighteenth century, the “moral law” is developed as natural right that requires the supplement of a positive, civil law. Natural law does not play a role in Jewish-Arabic philosophy, at least not the role that it has in the Christian development. This is connected with the fact that for Jews and Arabs, the positive law is at once political and “ecclesiastical” law. The positive law of Moses or Mohammed is the *one* binding norm that suffices for leading life toward happiness [Glückseligkeit] (consisting in theory). Moses or Mohammed are understood as philosopher-legislators. The presupposition for this is the notion [Vorstellung] going back to the Platonic state. The Jewish-Arabic Middle Ages are thus in this respect much more “ancient” than the eighteenth century; by connecting to the ancient idea of a concrete *nomos* and *nomothetes*, it is more able to accept the concrete revelatory order than is the natural right- [naturrechtliche] eighteenth century.

I hope to be able to tell you something more precise, thought-through and intelligible about this in the winter. I would be grateful if you could let me know soon whether it is possible to fit in my lecture in the manner I proposed.

Please give my greetings to your wife, and warm wishes to you.

Yours,  
Leo Strauss

P.S.: I completely forgot to explain why I asked the favor of you of all people. This is of course because I would like to hear your opinion of my view.

## 5

Kirchhain, 27 February 1931.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

The passage on “politics and cosmos” is at *Nicomachean Ethics* VI, 7 (1141a21).

I've also included the "Konspektivismus,"<sup>7</sup> and would kindly ask you to pass it along to Gogarten. I'm thinking of developing it such that I make the critique from the second half explicit, especially by showing how Mannheim remains completely "helpless" when he inquires about [nach... fragt] politics as a science and about utopia without having been enlightened by Plato (excuse the barbaric sentence!). I will bring out this tendency by giving the whole piece the title: "Sophistry of our Time" [Sophistik der Zeit]. I will include the theses that I explained in my lecture on the religious situation of the present (the second cave, etc.). I am hopeful that, reworked in the way that I have now planned, the essay will provide insights and amusement to you – in any case be much better than it is now. So then: If Gogarten<sup>8</sup> is willing to recommend the expanded and improved essay to a suitable publisher—be it as a contribution to a journal or as a booklet on its own—I will gladly begin working on it.

On Sunday, I am returning to Berlin. I don't want to say my final goodbye without thanking you again with all my heart for the important and varied suggestions and instruction that you have given me through your lecture and in private conversation. I also want to thank your wife again for her kindness.

With cordial greetings to you and your wife,

Yours

Leo Strauss

## 6

Berlin-Neutempelhof, 7 May 1931.  
Hohenzollernkorso 11.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

Along with this letter, I am sending you the page proofs of the second volume of the Mendelssohn anniversary edition, which I co-edited. I supplied "Pope ein Metaphysiker," "Sendschreiben an den Magister Lessing," "Kommentar zu den 'Termini der Logik,'" and "Abhandlung über die Evidenz." If you could look at my introductions at your convenience, I would be very grateful to hear your opinion of the theses I present there (e.g. with respect to Rousseau).

Last Monday, I gave a lecture on Cohen<sup>9</sup> and Maimonides. I tried to show that, *despite everything*, Cohen is still right in his claim that Maimonides is *fundamentally* a Platonist and *not* an Aristotelian. Of



course, one cannot demonstrate this as *directly* as Cohen has. This lecture was the first time that I publicly voiced my thesis about Islamic-Jewish scholasticism (that it understands revelation through the framework staked out in Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*). It's too bad that you weren't there; I would have liked to hear your opinion. You would have also seen how much I profited from your Plato lectures.

Klein<sup>10</sup> told me that you're immersed in your work. I hope that you will nevertheless still come to Berlin before the year is out.

Please send my regards to your wife, and my warmest wishes to you,

Yours,

Leo Strauss

7

Wandlitzsee, 23 May 1931.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

I am using the peace and quiet of Pentecost to write you about a matter that I've been mulling over for quite some time. It is a matter that concerns my person, and nothing more. I must therefore apologize in advance that, of all people, I am bothering you with it, who are up to your ears in work. But a chain of events has made it such that the only way to promote my matter – at least as far as I can see—leads through you. So...

Klein told me that you occasionally asked him in Marburg why I wasn't pursuing my Habilitation, to which he responded that my situation was fine as it was, and at least financially better off than that of a *Privatdozent* [private lecturer]. In this, Klein underestimated how much it would mean to me not to always have to sit alone in my Neutempelhof digs, but instead to be driven by teaching duties to much more diligent work and to have my work stimulated in many respects. And he forgot that, in as much as is humanly possible to judge, my current financial foundation wouldn't be shaken by pursuing a Habilitation. In short, I would very much like become habilitated.

There are, of course, private and non-private reservations I have against it. Private: against becoming dragged into the "worldly life" (for apparently life at a university is not exactly a *vita contemplativa*); my convenience and still other things revolt against this. Non-private reservations: these concern my being Jewish [Judentum]. Given the disgraceful nationalizing of all good things, and thus also of science, it is not an indifferent

fact that if I were asked what nation I belong to [welcher Nation ich sei], I would answer: Jew, and *not* German. I could leave no doubt about this in a potential Habilitation process, and this would further increase the difficulty of the Habilitation that a Jew already has. But *despite all reservations* it seems to me good and right to undertake the necessary steps to undertake a Habilitation.

And now you will be amazed on whom my eyes have fallen: Tillich<sup>11</sup>! It speaks for him that he is not an anti-Semite, that as a consequence of his conspectivism he does not demand allegiance to some position approved by him, that he is in Frankfurt. For, whatever one may say against Frankfurt, I would prefer it to Giessen and the like—by the way also for economic reasons.

Klein and I had thought up the possibility of Tillich together. Then Klein told me that you know Tillich, are on his good side.

Dear Mr. Krüger! After this preparation I can formulate my request: When you see Tillich in Frankfurt and have the chance, can you make him aware of me in an appropriate manner?

The whole matter has the catch that, for financial reasons, I would hardly be in a position to visit Tillich in Frankfurt this year. With the funds I have available, I need to travel to Cassirer in Hamburg, in order to make sure that in case of being asked he at least wouldn't do anything *against* me. Since I thus can't even see Tillich for the time being I am all the more interested in his hearing my name from you. Since he is "open for anything new," he may perhaps look favorably on my conjectures about Islamic scholasticism and about Hobbes.

I would be happy to hear from you soon about how you receive my request and how you judge the prospects.

In asking you *not* to think of "the devil to whom one shouldn't give an inch," and in also asking you to send my regards to your wife, I am sincerely

Yours,  
Leo Strauss

## 8

Berlin, 1 June 1931.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

I left the letter alone for over a week. Since I still stand behind it, I will send it off. Receive it kindly!

In the meantime, I have come into full possession of your Kant book and into ownership of half of it. I will read it very soon, or more precisely, study it. I already glanced at the Introduction and Conclusion, which give a clear picture of your *tendency*: instead of understanding Plato by way of Kant—as the Neo-Kantians do—[you] conversely allow Plato to put Kant, and especially us, in question.

By the way, have you sent your book to *Ebbinghaus*<sup>12</sup>? If not, I would highly recommend it; for he will surely find in your work the words for many things, words he so often seems to lack.

In any case, I thank you kindly for your book, the study of which will surely be very useful to me once I have made some further progress myself—it is becoming ever clearer to me that *Hobbes* faced the same problem as Kant; the parallels are surprisingly extensive.

Thank you for your kind and interesting letter of 12 May. The prospect of having you review my work continues to please me. Whether or not I review your book depends on whether Hinneberg<sup>13</sup> has already assigned it, and whether there are several months' time to write the review. I am very busy in the coming months, since I have to write an article on a somewhat intricate subject for the Academy's correspondence page.

If I had the money, I would come to Marburg to deliver my Cohen-Maimonides talk to you and others who are interested. I believe that you and I could agree on this subject. I am very interested in your suggestion about a possible presentation to the Kant-society in Marburg, and would be very pleased if that could be arranged without much effort.

In refraining from yet another *captatio benevolentiae*,<sup>14</sup> but in thanking you again I remain with greetings to you and your wife,

Yours,

Leo Strauss

## 9

Berlin, 28 June 1931.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

Thank you very much for your kind, extensive, and highly instructive letter. I really did not count on your writing so soon, and am all the more delighted. The prospects, however, that you offer me (Teddy Wiesengrund,<sup>15</sup> Mannheim,<sup>16</sup> Horkheimer,<sup>17</sup> etc.) are less delightful. But since one can't expect a mutton to have five legs, I'll take a bite out of the

sour apple. I believe that my rural background alone is sufficient to protect me from the conspectivist *crepe de chine* spirit. Social duties would be awful. But they would merely be awful; they wouldn't drive me crazy in the main respect. In any case, many thanks for your investigations and your continued readiness to take my interests into account.

Of course I would be very interested in your lecture. Could you not provide me with your concept [Konzept] on short notice? Klein and I would probably be able to decipher it together.

I re-read the first sixty pages of your book. Whether it's a matter of it being in print, or whether you changed some details, I like the book even *more* than in manuscript form. Of course, it has in part become more difficult on account of the revising and shortening (§9 in particular is very difficult). Because of its focus on Hobbes, §8 is just what I was looking for [ein gefundenes Fressen]. A small cosmetic error: the question mark on p. 61 after "Manes." Manes is—or is considered to be—the founder of Manichaeism (cf. Bayle, Dict., article on Manichéens, first sentence). Please take heed of this in the second edition.

In am just finishing an essay in which, among other things, I deal with the Platonism of Arabic-Jewish philosophy. I would very much like to send you a typescript of this essay; that way I could take your concerns into account.

Many greetings to your wife,  
Yours,  
Leo Strauss

When you see them, please thank Gadamer<sup>18</sup> and Löwith<sup>19</sup> many times in my name for what they have been sending me.

## 10

Berlin, 8 July 1931.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

Pardon me for bothering you yet again, but this time it is a matter that can be settled with a postcard. So, then:

A good acquaintance of mine and a good friend of Erich Frank,<sup>20</sup> who has occasionally spoken to Frank about me, has spontaneously offered to write to Frank and ask him to intervene with Tillich on my behalf. Do you consider that opportune? Does Tillich think well of Frank? Regardless of a

“parallel action” on Frank’s part, would you be willing to speak to Tillich on occasion? After all, with your theological intentions I think you’re simply more “interesting” to Tillich than Frank is, and thus your word counts for more than Frank’s. Even if it doesn’t count for *more*, it at least counts *differently*, by which I mean that it vouches for something other than Frank’s judgment does.

It borders on criminality that I’m taking up so much of your valuable time out of pure egotism; I can only hope to convince you, through occasional demonstration of my altruistic side, that I’m not completely immoral.

I would like to *confide* something to you that concerns you no less than me. I am worried that Klein, by all appearances, is not working enough. I could imagine that if he were forced to give a talk on one of the topics that he wants to treat (e.g. cause and causality) would provide a healthy compulsion to finish something. That can hardly be arranged here in Berlin; at least, *I* don’t see a possibility. Could you not gather together a circle of interested people in Marburg? The financial side of it would be unimportant; an honorarium wouldn’t be necessary, and I could somehow drum up the travel expenses here in Berlin. If you cannot entirely understand my concern [Sorge] please just believe me anyway. Perhaps I just know the dangers to which Klein is subject owing to his *phlegma* particularly well after years of almost daily interaction. “Exhortations” are entirely inappropriate; the only thing one can do is something like what I suggested. I recently spoke with Frau Herrmann about this matter. (The thought of writing to you only arose after this conversation. Perhaps I will also not tell her that I wrote to you.) Frau H. and I were of the same opinion that we need to talk independently with Klein about his work in the near future. It would be very welcome support for this “action,” you would be doing Klein a huge favor, if you could exert some pressure by making such a suggestion.

Klein would be very angry at me for this “solicitude” [Fürsorge]; but you will understand that there are situations in which one may no longer pay heed to *sensitivities*. Despite all reservations, then, I am sending this letter. Cordial greetings to you and your wife,

Yours,  
Leo Strauss

## 11

Berlin-Neutempelhof, 25 Juli 1931.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

Please forgive me for not answering your letter promptly, as would really have been proper, but I had so many things on my mind! Immediate worries about money, long-term worries about money—the danger of dismantling [Abbau]—my sister taking her doctoral exam (philosophy with Hartmann, who implored her, “Not one bit of epistemology?” but then rested content with Plato’s ideas-hypothesis doctrine in the *Phaedo* and similar things). I’m picking up my pen during my first sigh of relief, as it were, in order to thank you from the bottom of my heart for your very great and certainly anything but pleasant efforts on behalf of my earthly future. The negative result of these efforts could not put me in a bad mood, as the reason for it stands in preestablished harmony with my convictions about “cultural politics.” My deepest resistance against any effort on my part to find a place in a German university arose from the very fact that I take the “hyper-foreignization”/“foreign infiltration” [“Überfremdung“] of German universities to be supportable [tragbar] for neither side: neither for the Germans nor for the Jews. And it is indefensible to claim a right for oneself, thinking oneself somehow entitled to it, while one calls the general right into question. I am thus not as dissatisfied with the negative result as you might have thought. But again—to conclude the episode—my most heartfelt thanks!

As regards Klein, I felt it appropriate to share your letter with Frau Herrmann. Of course, I take full responsibility for this. As things are, it was necessary and right.

I am sending along my essay. I would be grateful if you could look over it soon. It would suffice for you to look at pages 1–5 and 23–37; the middle part is much too “medieval.” You will see how much I learned from you. I could not cite you for technical reasons. Since I only have a few copies of the typescript, I would be grateful if you could send it back to me shortly.

With cordial greetings to you and your wife,  
Yours,  
Leo Strauss

## 12

3 October 1931.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

Your letter is much appreciated. I would have written you long ago, had I not feared to come across as the annoying admonisher—even without repeating my request. Now that the worst is behind you—you’ve read my “book”—my concerns are gone.

I am in great difficulty: my institution is under threat of dissolving. I have to be prepared to have nothing [vis-à-vis de rien zu stehen] as of January 1. And Kirchhain can no longer serve as a last resort. Since I have no “connections” whatsoever, I don’t see a way out, and am thus somewhat at a loss. (Please be so gracious as to excuse the effect that has on this letter.) As bad luck would have it, I don’t have anything finished to the extent that I could attempt any steps on its basis. “Hobbes” still needs a year of intensive work. The only powerful person that I know is Hinneberg—don’t laugh! But I cannot seek him out; I have to wait until he invites me. He would only invite me if my book were well reviewed. You can thus understand that I am replying to you immediately.

1) You do not know Spinoza. But you do know the dominant position, e.g. from Dilthey’s<sup>21</sup> *Gesammelte Schriften* II. You therefore know what I *do not* take heed of, if you prefer: what I forget or do not understand, what Dilthey understood: “Panteism.” Besides, the book is being reviewed by someone who knows Spinoza. You may limit yourself in your review to the problem of the Enlightenment in general.

2) There is *no* literature on my book’s topic that is worth noting. As regards literature, you would need to consider works on the history of exegesis and hermeneutics in general (A. Merx, C. Siegfried, A. Schweitzer, et al.). But this literature generally circumvents the problem of presupposing unbelief.

It may reassure you to know that “the greatest authority on Spinoza in the world” (!)—the Jesuit Dunin-Borkowski<sup>22</sup> (his book *The Young Despinosa* is in the Marburg philosophical library) has twice reviewed the book favorably. I am including excerpts of these reviews with the request to send them back at some point. D’s emphasis on my work’s contributing to “apologetic science” presumably means the same as what you called “impartiality.”

My work's mistakes are all too familiar to me: don't pull any punches, also not in the review itself! I would be very grateful, however, if you could articulate the actual intention of the book more clearly than I was able to due to the censorship I found myself under.

We still have to correspond about Calvin. Right now, I don't have the leisure for it. I believe you that, seduced by Barth<sup>23</sup> and Gogarten, I underestimated the role of natural theology in Calvin. My writing, after all, is nothing but a *response* of unbelief to the belief of Barth's and Gogarten's observance—at least that is the intent. Please just do not misunderstand me to have been of the opinion, at the time I wrote the book, that one must remain satisfied with a difference of “standpoints” in the face of the belief character [Glaubenscharakter] of both opposing positions (theism and atheism). The fact that Nietzsche's critique exists, even if only by intention, always counted as proof to me that one cannot remain satisfied with ceremonial bows to the other position.

I must conclude. Before your letter arrived, I already wrote a long letter to Löwith, and now I must go.

Please pardon the unease [Nervosität] of this letter.

Many kind regards to you and your wife, and my dearest thanks for your friendly efforts,

Yours,

Leo Strauss

### 13

Berlin, 15 October 1931.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

You will think: “There he is again, the old nuisance.” But at least this time it is not about the review. If Hinneberg has exhorted you regarding the review via Gadamer, it is really not my fault and attributable only to H's avuncular concern about my “career.” This time it's not about the review, then, but about the following: after her doctoral defense, my sister is sitting jobless in Kirchhain, and would at least like not to forget everything she has learned. She would therefore like to use the Marburg library. For this, she needs a faculty member to vouch for her. Would you be willing to vouch for my sister on the basis of my vouching for her? If yes, it would probably be easiest if you could kindly let her know (Bettina Strauss, Kirchhain, Römerstrasse) when she can come by to speak with you about this.



I heard from Klein that my last letter to you made a very gloomy impression. I am sorry for that. In the meantime, I have recovered from the initial shock. In the spirit of my great teacher, I will try in the war of all against all to defend my life and limbs according to my powers, to which I am entitled according to natural right.

As concerns the topic of Hobbes, I am in the process of, or actually already finished, showing that his “political science” represents a repetition of Socratic *technē politike*, a repetition, however, that very much flattens the Socratic problem. I believe that it will in this way become possible to determine precisely what is popularly called rationalism. Your Kant book will come in very handy for this; to me it is ever clearer that the problem of Hobbes has the same structure as that of Kant.’ The *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* is an apolitical, thus narrower repetition of the “political science.” At the moment, I am investigating the critique of natural right on the part of the professional jurists. A hair-raising thoughtlessness, this critique! Once I have developed my meta-critique, I will present it to you. As much as our opinions concerning natural theology may diverge, we will likely come to an agreement on the necessity and possibility of natural right. Now that Plato has taught me the untenability of the Hobbesian premises [des H.schen Ansatzes], Hobbes no longer suffices for me as a guarantor of the possibility of natural right in a world without providence; my guarantor is—Plato. Do you happen to be familiar with the myth of the *Statesman*?

I have now discovered a fourth man who shares our opinion concerning the present as a second cave: Ebbinghaus. His talk “On Progress in Metaphysics”<sup>24</sup> contains several quite excellent formulations; I will make note of the talk in DLZ [*Deutsche Literaturzeitung*].<sup>25</sup>

Cordial greetings to you and your wife,

Yours

Leo Strauss

## 14

Berlin-Neutempelhof, 16 November 1931.  
Hohenzollernkorso 11.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

I actually wanted to wait to write to you until I had closely read your review. But its publication is taking much longer than I had anticipated in light of Hinneberg’s promises: it’s supposed to appear in two or three

weeks. I learned of your review's arrival at the DLZ shortly before you wrote me, when Hinneberg called and invited me to come to his place immediately to read the review. I had barely hung up when your letter arrived. Your assurance that you "hadn't quite made me look bad" made me worry that you had given me undeserved consideration; I was all the happier with your review's conclusion. I read the review twice in Hinneberg's office, in haste and excitement—with such great excitement that I cannot even give an account of the details anymore. In any case, I am deeply grateful for your coherent and clear exposition of what I had said only rhapsodically—partly for extrinsic reasons and partly out of lack of ability. I cannot thank you for this without having first thanked you for the effort of reading you have undergone. If the effort paid off even a little, I flatter myself that I have done enough. I couldn't have accomplished more at the time that I wrote the work, given the prejudices in which I was then stuck.

I learned more from Klein about the fate of your treatise on natural theology. I would very much like to look at it. I may perhaps come to Kirchhain and then also to Marburg around the end of December or early January.

The general uncertainty is demoralizing me to the extent that I no longer take my duties with regard to the academy very seriously, and am instead working more on "Hobbes." I have come a considerable way, and can at least see an end to it. I am also writing a foreword (not planned for print) in which I attempt to establish the desideratum of natural right [Desiderat des Naturrechts] and therefore of a critical history of natural right. My main goal is to emphasize that historical consciousness is the sole presupposition of today's skepticism with regard to natural right. If historical consciousness isn't a carriage that one can stop whenever one pleases, then one arrives at a historical destruction of historical consciousness. The latter proves to be historically conditioned and limited to a particular situation; it is nothing other than the attempt, untransparent to itself, [der sich selbst undurchsichtige Versuch] to win *back* [wiederzugewinnen] the ancient freedom of philosophizing: the battle against prejudices is the primordial form [Urform] of historical consciousness. You will find a somewhat more precise formulation in the enclosed review.<sup>26</sup>

My sister sends her apologies for not staying in touch. She was unexpectedly offered a substitute position in Frankfurt and therefore went there immediately. She thanks you for your kind offer, and I join her in her gratitude.

With cordial greetings to you and your wife,  
Yours,  
Leo Strauss

## 15

[no date]

Dear Mr. Krüger,

I am approaching you today with a very personal request. It looks like I will have to try to get a stipend from the emergency association [Notgemeinschaft] for my work on Plato among the Arabs. I got the form today at the emergency association's office, and saw that one has to fill in "who can provide information about your economic circumstances?" Furthermore, one has to give one's parents' address. This means that the emergency association would inquire with the mayor's association in my hometown about my father's financial status. Since my father is not considered "indigent" by any legal standard, the information would be that I am not eligible for the stipend. Nevertheless, it is clear that I will not be able to receive a penny from my father. How can I avoid the pitfall of answering this question? I take it that you were in a similar situation when you applied for the emergency association stipend, and that as an expert [expertus] you can give me advice. Beyond this, I would welcome any further tips that could help me get the stipend that would enable me to complete my investigations of the above-mentioned topic and of Hobbes. The prospects, of course, are very dim. But I *have* to try anyway.

Best wishes,

Yours,

Leo Strauss

## 16

Berlin, 12 December 1931.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

Thank you very much for your truly exhaustive advice as concerns the procedure with the emergency association. And please allow me not to suppress the reflection that there are human beings upon whom one can rely—which can't be entirely denied on the grounds of certain passages of scripture that contradict this. Let me add that I have suspended the application to the emergency association for the time being in order to pursue another stipend that is better suited to my purposes: a foreign stipend from the Rockefeller Institute for Political Science. I will take the liberty of naming you among those people able to give some information about me *qua*

scientific researcher. The secretary told me that they particularly want to establish connections with the “younger generation.”

I haven’t heard anything more about your matter. I only mentioned Kroner’s verdict about your book to Hinneberg in passing (I knew about it from Klein & Gadamer). Any resistance that K. could possibly offer against you might perhaps be expected to come from Heimsoeth<sup>27</sup> and N. Hartmann.<sup>28</sup> That is at least how I construe things. But this especially you will know best.

I cannot say whether or not you should write to Hinneberg. I have the impression that he would feel downright *honored* to receive a letter from you; that is how highly he esteems you. In light of this, a healthy Machiavellism might advise one not to write. But you know the world [mundus] and its rules better than I do.

I can fully understand that you do not wish to write to Ebbinghaus in the manner that Hinneberg suggested. But I had to convey Hinneberg’s suggestions to you anyway. As concerns Ebbinghaus: Do you know his work on Kant’s doctrine of perpetual peace and the question of war guilt (in the same volume as his “Progress in Metaphysics”)? I would be very interested to know your judgments on his theses concerning Kant’s doctrine of right and the state of nature.

In the meantime, I have again read a bit in *Being and Time*. Whatever you wish to say about the book *sub specie veritatis*, it expresses the essence of modernity in the purest manner, i.e. *the* modern reservation against Greeks, Jews, and Christians. By the way, nothing appears to depict the inner difficulty of the book more clearly than the paragraph about Yorck<sup>29</sup>: the latter’s words on the moral intention of all philosophy seem to me to be cited with the intention of “communicating indirectly” what is also decisive for Heidegger. In your reading, one must apparently interpret in favor of the defendant [pro reo] Heidegger’s direct statements about philosophy not being able to make any authoritative pronouncement [Machtspruch] and other such things.<sup>30</sup> Because the passages from Yorck are not just cited for fun.

There are several apposite remarks by Thomas Haecker<sup>31</sup> about Tillich’s philosophy as *sophistry* in the academic pages of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* of 6 December. I think that you will like them as much as I did.

With cordial greetings to you and your wife,

Yours,

Leo Strauss

## 17

Berlin, 19 August 1932.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

I am sending you four offprints of my Schmitt-review, with the request that you keep one for yourself and pass one each on to Klein, Frank, and Gadamer. (I am writing Löwith soon myself.)

Thank you very much for sending back Schmitt's<sup>32</sup> "Catholicism," and—especially—for your letter. Your approvals pleased me very much. About your misgivings ("Do I understand your reference to Plato and therewith your own intention correctly when I suppose: what is of concern to you is the 'political' dialectic of the totalities struggling over the character of the 'right' [um das ‚Richtige‘]? But then how would one avoid the Schmittian neutral affirmation of all that is 'meant seriously'? How can there be a decisive concretization of the search concerning the character of the right [die Suche nach dem Richtigen] without a 'confession of faith' [Glaubensbekenntnis]?"), I would comment: p. 746f. has to be combined with p. 749, first paragraph. That is, I *believe* [glaube] that there is ultimately only *one* opposition, namely between "left" and "right," "freedom" and "authority;" or, to put it in more honest ancient terms, between ἡδὺ [pleasure] and ἀγαθόν [good]. In order to *show* this, one would of course have to write a history of politics from Plato to Rousseau. The "confession of faith" that you demand seems to me to lie in the δοῦναι καὶ δεῖξασθαι<sup>33</sup> as such, in modern parlance, in "probity" [Redlichkeit]: the struggle between "left" and "right" is the struggle between utopian dizziness/fraud [utopistischem Schwindel] and sobriety. Thus, what it says on p. 746f. is only relevant *ad hominem*. In opposition to agreement at any price, conflict is truer. But only peace, i.e. agreement in the truth, can be the last word. That this agreement of reason is possible—I firmly believe [firmiter credo].

Hopefully, you will know what to make of this exhortation. If not, please ask Klein, scrutinizer of my heart [perscrutatorem cordis mei].

Did you get a chance to look at my Hobbes sketch? What do you think of it?

With cordial greetings to you and your wife,

Yours,

Leo Strauss

## 18

[Post Office stamp: 21 August 1932; postcard]

Dear Mr. Krüger,

I completely forgot to ask you about a reference that will not take any effort on your part and will spare me much searching. (If, however, you can't answer the question immediately, the matter is of no importance.) Do you know which 18<sup>th</sup>-century (or 17<sup>th</sup>-century) authors Kant has in mind in the thesis of the first antinomy ("The world has a beginning in time"—I am concerned only with *time*, *not* with space)? And furthermore, do you know who contested this view (i.e., the first antinomy's thesis) in the centuries *before* Kant? Until now, I have only found anything in Cudworth<sup>34</sup> and Wollaston<sup>35</sup>; only traces, at most, in Clarke<sup>36</sup> and Curtius.<sup>37</sup> In any case, the argumentation is characteristically "unmodern." One finds it mainly in orthodox medieval Jews and Arabs—whom Wollaston references, incidentally. Indeed, perhaps the question is not *entirely* unimportant for an understanding of Kant.

A postcard with book titles is enough. I would be especially grateful if you could reply to me soon, since I would like to finish my commentary on Mendelssohn's *Morgenstunden*—the project for which I need the references—if at all possible, in the near future.

Cordial greetings to your wife, to Klein, and to yourself.

Yours,

Leo Strauss

## 19

Hotel Racine

23 Rue Racine

Paris (6<sup>th</sup> arr.), 8 October 1932.

[This letter is in French in the original.]

Dear Mrs. and Mr. Krüger,

I only today received our Klein's card announcing your son's birth, and that Mrs. Krüger is doing well. Please allow me to convey my heartfelt congratulations and allow me to add that in reading Klein's card, I felt a joy that was at once both personal and "supra-personal." Personal, regarding the feelings I have for both of you; "supra-personal" because I can see

the relation between this event and the healthy principles of Krügerian thought, which has as its aim the reestablishment of the natural order of things.

Please excuse me for taking this liberty, which you may consider a form of “poetic license.” For after all, isn’t it the same thing, in a certain sense, to express oneself in the extraordinary language of poets and in a foreign language? And that I write in French—you wanted me to, Mr. Krüger!

Allow me to express my most heartfelt devotion,

Yours,

Leo Strauss

## 20

Marburg, 13 November 1932.

Dear Mr. Strauss,

After having once already started writing you a letter that is now outdated, I at least want to thank you for your congratulations and briefly reply to your Hobbes. My wife has recovered slowly but steadily, and my son Lorenz is healthier so far than Krügerian thought will ever be.

Above all, I have to thank you for your manuscript, from which I once again learned a great deal and which I very much hope to see continued soon. Despite some reading in Hobbes in the meantime, I don’t have a mature knowledge of the matter. Thus, I can only pronounce an opinion on your opus as such. And with this, you have to forgive me if I place my criticism in the foreground—I’m only doing it because it requires more words. There are a few things that didn’t quite convince me, namely (1) the reduction of the anthropological problem to the problem of vanity; (2) the view that Hobbes repeats the Socratic question.

As to 1: In spite of everything, the impression for the naïve reader remains that competition cannot be dispensed with as an independent motive of “injury.” The “extreme case” that you eliminate nevertheless retains its importance, and regardless of this it seems that competition and mutual suspicion always form the *ground* upon which vanity can spread. A being from whom these *possibilities* are taken away and who does not need anything also needs no triumph; it would always already *be* “victorious.” Please understand: I grasp the distinction between Hobbes and Spinoza and am the last person to deny the significance of “vanity” (Hobbes’s linguistic usage is at first jarring here). But I have the impression that your

justified emphasis on the “anthropological” does not entirely do justice to the “natural” in Hobbes (\* perhaps it would leave a favorable impression if you relegated the laborious methodological passages to an excursus. The substantial [sachlich] beginning of your introduction would be adequately continued in the presentation of Hobbes’ *content*). As much as the naturalistic has to count as a secondary, “scientific” interpretation—this I do not deny—one also has to recognize that it simultaneously contains the problem of man’s place in nature (το παν). The extreme case of competition is anthropologically incommensurable, but in the contingency of the availability [Vorhandenseins] of resources there also lies the dependence of human beings—be they vain or humble—on the cosmos. To presuppose a pre-established harmony as normalcy here (as Hume and Smith do) would be a latent belief in providence. In short: I would like to ask whether Hobbes’ naturalistic procedure does not contain the awareness [Bewußtsein] of the “facticity” of the embodied human being in his interior naturalness [Innernatürlichkeit]—as wrong as he is to understand this facticity as “objectivity.” Like Descartes, he has an awareness [Bewußtsein] of the world as it “is” *prior to* the constitution of the modern spirit [Geist], but he can only express it in the realm of the “human” [im “Menschlichen”] and partially since he looks *backward* from the ground [Boden] of the modern spirit [Geist].

In particular, I would like to ask whether vanity can indeed be called the “essence” of man. I noticed an ambiguity in the terms “nature” and “primacy” [Primärsein], respectively, on page 27. In a certain sense vanity, also and especially according to Hobbes, is something *unnatural*. Doesn’t the sociability [Gemeinschaftlichkeit] of man that he presupposes contain a kind of “natural” indication of compatibility? What *you* say would be a kind of Hobbesian Manichaeism.

As to 2: Is Hobbes “foundation of liberalism” really identical to the Socratic intention? After all, Hobbes’ question concerning the “right” is not the same as the Socratic question concerning the good. Even if one does not insert some “external,” “demanding” moralism into the ancient αγαθον, the kind of obligation and the *ground* [Boden] of the question is a different one. It is a very indirect identity if you find an interest in political *science* on both sides. This is evident in the difference in mathematics then and now (cf. Klein). When Socrates and Hobbes both demand “humility,” this strikes me as analogous to when Lucretius and Augustine both speak of worry, fear, flight from oneself, etc. The radical enlightener and theologian meet in the *problem* of “evil,” of “corruption,” etc. (whereby I avail myself of Socrates as a “philosophical theologian”).



Similar questions arise at the conclusion of your critique of Schmitt, which by the way I agree with to the letter. I placed Schmitt before Gogarten in my seminar, and am thus following in your tracks. In a sense, your critical judgment is more instructive than Schmitt himself, who risks all his capital by way of superiority by toying with an absolute decision—more absolute even than a predestining God. (I am really growing tired of this flight to the decision. I may thereby be doing injustice to the “integral knowledge.” But this has so far remained in the background. The good thing about this word is after all that it states that, in contrast to the freedom of a “pure” consciousness [Freiheit eines „reinen“ Bewußtseins], we cannot choose what we want to use our freedom for or against.

Gogarten, for his part, *also* leaves many questionable things unsettled—not to mention his dilettantism. In this regard, his appropriation of Howald’s views on Greek ethics simply annoyed me.

Could you perhaps investigate in Paris whether there is a French translation of the mysterious Donoso Cortes<sup>38</sup>? Apparently, there is no German translation. The Romance linguists here don’t even know Spanish. After all, this Catholicism-turned-desperate serves Schmitt as his model—that is how it has seemed for far.

Please let me hear from you! Like your “hero,” you’re living in exile in Paris. How are you faring there?

With cordial greetings, from me as well as my wife,

Yours,

G. Krüger

I find your polemic against Dilthey’s standpoint to be important, but difficult to discuss. You too don’t really start from a “natural” basis when you begin from the situation of the falling-away from revelation. It is not clear to me how you understand antiquity to be exemplary here.

I will give your piece to Gadamer.

## 21

Paris, 17 November 1932.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

Thank you very much for your letter. I am replying immediately because I expect guests from Germany today or tomorrow, and don’t know when I’ll get around to writing again, and because I would like a reply to my reply *soon*. You can imagine how valuable it is to have you look at my suppositions with your examining eye. I am thus *awaiting* your reply.

To begin with, a question concerning form. You know my work on Spinoza, and you know what I lack: “mit der Aussprach” [“with expression”], as Mrs. Courths-Mahler<sup>39</sup> would say; or, more precisely, the lucidity of the whole, *composition* is not my strength. So please tell me, without regard for my self-love, whether my “Hobbes” risks becoming “like that” again. For that is what I would like to avoid at all costs “pro virili” [“to the best of my ability”].

It is clear from your critique of my “Hobbes-Socrates” thesis that I must have failed drastically in this regard. Yet a while back you agreed with my supposition concerning “the second cave.” Thus, we are fundamentally in agreement. I must therefore have expressed myself very poorly, if you do not recognize that orienting my understanding of Hobbes in terms of Socrates is an attempt to take this aperçu *seriously*.

You ask whether Hobbes’ “foundation of liberalism” is really identical to Socrates’ intention? Of course not! But that is precisely the question: how can a reasonable human being, a *philosopher* (!) be liberal or be the founder of liberalism? Or, more pointedly: how can a philosopher, a man of science, teach like a sophist? Once this has become possible—and it has become possible above all on account of Hobbes—then the fundamentally *clear* situation that Plato had created by allocating ἀγαθόν to τέχνη and ἐπιστήμη, ἡδύ to sophistry and barbering professions (to professors, journalists, demagogues, business leaders, poets, etc.) becomes fundamentally unclear, with the upshot being the total lack of orientation in the “currents of contemporary thought,” in which “everything” becomes philosophically possible. Thus, we have to ask: how can a philosopher, a man who takes matters *seriously* [ein Mann, dem es *ernst* ist], teach like a sophist? First, then, one has to note that Hobbes is a *philosopher*, not a “practical politician,” and also not an historian, a prudent [kluger] *observer*, like Thucydides, but a *questioning* human being, i.e., one who inquires into the “*order of human things*.” Thus it doesn’t seem to me to be “a very indirect identity,” as you say, when I find an interest in political science in Socrates and in Hobbes. I must admit frankly, I do not understand your criticism. *On this point*, I thought we were in agreement. I can only explain your criticism by assuming that I again expressed myself in a very confused and complicated manner.

The enormous *difference* between the τέχνη πολιτική that is itself absolutely problematic for Socrates and the *philosophia civilis* that is “self-evident” to Hobbes—I don’t believe I underestimated that. But how can a difference appear where there is nothing in common? This commonality

is what I called the “approach” [“Ansatz”]: the need/wish [Desiderat] for a τέχνη πολιτική, developed in taking one’s bearings from functioning τέχναι. Perhaps this commonality strikes you as too formal; it does not seem so to me, for the reason given in the preceding paragraph. Despite the enormous difference between ancient and modern science—which I precisely wish to *understand*—they are both *science*, and this says something about the “matter,” as a glance at pre-scientific possibilities of guidance [Führungs-Möglichkeiten] (be it Homer, Lycurgus, Pericles, or even Moses) teaches.

I don’t think I have left any doubt that Hobbes precisely *does not* begin with the Socratic *question*, but with a completely different one that presupposes that the Socratic question has been answered. Admittedly, Hobbes has indeed a different *ground* than Socrates, but this must be analyzed not on the basis of our superior historical knowledge, but on the basis of “the matter itself.”

Of course, the difference between you and me lies deeper. You touch upon this in your comment about my Dilthey critique (which, by the way, is *very* unclear at several points, as I well know). It is a matter of “historicity.” You see a contradiction in the fact that I believe in a “*natural*” basis *and* view antiquity to be the standard [massgeblich]. I am inclined to assume—until there is evidence to the contrary—that antiquity (more precisely: Socrates-Plato) is the standard [massgeblich] *precisely because* it philosophized *naturally*, i.e. originally inquired into the order that is *natural* for human beings. The fact that this possibility was opened up in Greece and only there—that is a matter of indifference as long as it remains the case that Socrates-Plato’s question and answer are the natural question and the natural answer: *in* philosophizing, Socrates is *already* no longer a Greek, but instead a human being. The historical condition for philosophy arising was the decay of νομος in democracy—but this *historical* condition is to begin with as arbitrary as *any condition*. That is precisely what Socrates did: his questioning that arises from a specific historical situation—decay of the πολις, sophistry—becomes *universal* because it is *radical*, and is thus *in principle* just as directed at Lycurgus and Minos as Protagoras and Callicles. It is a *natural* questioning because it is not concerned with Athens or Sparta but with the *human being*. In this sense, philosophy has *always* been and has remained unhistorical. That we *today* cannot get by without history is a fact external to philosophy. It goes together with it being the case that (1) through the absurd intermixing [absurde Verflechtung] of a νομος-tradition with a philosophical tradition, i.e. of

biblical revelation with Greek philosophy, of a tradition of obedience with a “tradition” of questioning (which, as a tradition, is no longer a questioning), and (2) through the struggle against the tradition of revelation, undertaken in a manner of speaking in the dark, we have been maneuvered into the second cave and today no longer even have the *means* to philosophize naturally. After all, we too are natural beings—but we live in an entirely unnatural situation. Since the seventeenth century, the real point [Sinne] of the struggle with tradition was to recover the Greek freedom of philosophizing. It was really a Renaissance movement. In all “foundations” [Grundlegungen], in all psychology and all historicism there is this striving: to find, to find *again*, an original, *natural* basis. But from its inception until Heidegger (*including* the latter), modern philosophy understood itself to be progress and progressive (with some justification, you will say, insofar as it had knowledge to impart that the Greeks did not possess: Christian knowledge. *Thus* the unradicality of modern philosophy: it thinks it can presume that the fundamental questions have already been answered, and can therefore “progress;” this is the neglect [Versäumnis] of the Socratic question that Nietzsche later denounced, and the neglect of ontology that Heidegger uncovered. I don’t know if this has made a bit clearer to you how I conceive of “the whole matter” [“das Ganze”]. Tell me a word or two about this as well.

Now, to “vanity.” You do not deny, but in fact admit, the central role that vanity plays in Hobbesian philosophy, and also secundum veritatem [according to the truth] But you ask: Can one dispense with competition as an independent motive of the will to injure? Does competition not “announce” the problem of man’s *dependence* on the universe? Is not vanity itself grounded in competition, insofar as it is grounded in this dependence?—I admit that. As you can see in my “table of contents”, my plan includes the section “The Exposedness of Man [Preisgegebenheit].” I will thus address this question when I have the strength to work. I am also aware that I’ve made several slips in my current presentation especially with respect to this question (“vanity is the essence of man” is of course nonsense). But: I must *begin* with vanity and I have to *isolate* it as the *target* [Wogegen] of the state (in this context, that means “nature”: the *prior* of all education *against which* [wogegen] education is deployed; one does not combat competition, after all; one only tames it, but that means freeing it from the vanity that is included in it). Otherwise Hobbes’ thought cannot be clarified and one is left with the half-measures with which people have thus far been satisfied. Let me keep working. If my hands don’t grow weak,

you will someday receive the whole thing, and then it will be clear to you that one cannot well proceed differently. *One does not succeed* if one proceeds *systematically*, i.e., if one begins by establishing that for Hobbes, the human being is a rational animal, etc. One must proceed *phenomenologically* (in the Hegelian sense), present the *history* of humankind and allow the actual presuppositions to appear gradually. Hobbes' philosophy is a philosophy of *Enlightenment*, a *foundation* of Enlightenment. And such a foundation is only possible in the form of "meditations" ["Meditationen"-Form], *not* systematically; one can only speak systematically to those who have *already* been "enlightened." One may compare Hobbes to Plato in this regard as well, since he *begins* with the question of the human essence just as little as Plato begins with the question of the soul. Hobbes begins with the question concerning what must be *combated* in man, i.e. with the question concerning human nature. What this beginning *means*, what kind of presuppositions it contains, must be elicited on the basis of his *answer* to the question. The question of the "nature" of man is the question of the principle of evil in man; vanity is *the* evil, not competition as such, not suspicion as such; the vain one as such *wants* to injure, the suspicious one and the competitive one want to injure on reasonable grounds.

Okay, Mr. Krüger! Be a good fellow [Soyez bon garçon] and write to me *soon*. Forgive my impatience! But you will understand it and hence be so generous as to forgive me, if you consider (1) how much my work means to me and (2) how much your judgment of my work means to me.

As for Donoso Cortes: the regular handbook for French booksellers does not list *any* French translations. But I will continue to look. On Sunday I'm visiting Maritain; maybe he knows something.

I just recently wanted to send you a postcard when I discovered somewhere what Gambetta called the idiots (meaning, in our field, people like Spranger, Maier, Mannheim, also Hönigswald): the assistant veterinarians [*les sous-vétérinaires*]. I find this designation simply magnificent, unsurpassable. A wonderful title, by the way, for a collection of reviews.

Paris: ah well! You may know that I don't *see* much?—I was impressed by André Siegfried,<sup>40</sup> a geographer whose talk I attended, and Massignon,<sup>41</sup> an Arabist with whom I spoke. Both "first rate." Massignon is a human being the likes of which I have not met many: stupendously learned, *very* intelligent [klug], and a burning soul. Farewell! Best wishes to all three of you, and cordial greetings to you and your wife.

Yours,  
Leo Strauss

## 21A

[Fragment of a draft of the letter of 17 November 1932]

2) Does Hobbes repeat the question of Socrates?

Back when I gave you the Ebbinghaus review, you agreed with my thesis about the “second cave.” So we are fundamentally in agreement. Did I then express myself so unclearly that you did not realize that my orientation of my interpretation of Hobbes in terms of Socrates is an attempt to take this aperçu seriously? Did I again write just as intricately as in my Spinoza book? Please do let me know about this!

You ask: whether Hobbes’ “foundation of liberalism” is really identical to Socrates’ intention? Of course not! But that is precisely the question: how can a reasonable human being, a *philosopher* (!) be liberal or be the founder of liberalism? Or, more pointedly: how can a philosopher, a man of science, teach like a sophist? Once this has become possible—and it has become possible above all on account of Hobbes—then the fundamentally *clear* situation that Plato had created by correlating ἀγαθόν with τέχνη and ἐπιστήμη, ἥδύ with sophistry and barbering professions is fundamentally unclear, with the upshot being the complete loss of orientation in which “everything” becomes philosophically possible. Thus we have to ask: how can a philosopher, a man who takes the matter seriously [dem es um die Sache geht], teach like a sophist? First, then, one has to note that Hobbes is a *philosopher*, not a “practical politician,” and also not an historian, a prudent [kluger] *observer*, like Thucydides, but a *questioning* human being, i.e., one who inquires into the “*order of human things*.” Thus it does not seem to me to be “a very indirect identity,” as you say, when I find in both Socrates and in H an interest in political science. I must admit frankly: I do not understand you on this point. *On this point*, I thought, we were in agreement.

You continue: “This is obvious in the difference in mathematics then and now (cf. Klein).” The *difference* between modern and ancient mathematics plays no role in the initial approach; besides, the difference can only be clarified if one holds onto the *scientific* intention of both “mathematics.” (Klein, by the way, doesn’t think any differently than I do about the necessity of *direct* confrontation of the foundation of modern philosophy with the foundation of ancient philosophy.)

Furthermore, I don't believe I have left any doubt in my work that Hobbes precisely *does not* begin with the Socratic *question*, but with the completely different one of the "nature" of man. But one can only understand what this *means* if one notes that he assumes the Socratic question of the essence of virtue to have *already been answered*.

To be sure, the "ground" from which Socrates and Hobbes inquire is very different. But what it is important to know first is that Hobbes' ground is not comparable to that of Socrates in terms of originality. Please also don't forget that the comparison of Socrates and Hobbes in sections 2–3 only intends to prove the *possibility* of comparing the concrete statements of Socrates-Plato with the corresponding concrete statements of Hobbes. Of course, I have the strongest doubt whether I have the strength to achieve *that*. But that *someone* must do it, *that* I wanted to say.

## 22

Paris, 29 November 1932.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

Please be so kind as to forgive me for bothering you again about the "Hobbes" matter, but it is really the last time. I will leave you unscathed in the future.

I had taken the liberty of asking you whether my present work risks becoming as impossible in manner of writing and in composition as my Spinoza work. The question is rather important to me, and as things stand, the only person who can answer it is you. Should I interpret your silence to mean that you are sparing me a bitter truth? I do not take that to be your habit, and besides, you would be doing me a disservice. May I therefore ask you to tell me which parts you take to have turned out especially badly in composition or manner of writing? Since I know my way around my work, very rough indications will suffice, so it would be five minutes work for you, at most. And if you would really like to do me a favor, please reply soon.

With cordial greetings I remain

Ever yours,

Leo Strauss

Please send my greetings to your wife.

## 23

Marburg, 1 December 1932.

Dear Mr. Strauss,

I am hurrying to reply to your letter that arrived today, and first of all urge you to please not be angry with me and excuse me for having not answered your letter from 17 November. You guess correctly that I did not remain silent in order to “spare you a truth”—which, besides, need not at all be felt as “bitter.” I simply *had no time*, and could also not decipher *your handwriting* in many places. You see how external the reasons are. However, it is not as easy for me to reply to your last letter as you think—for that I need more leisure than I have had of late, not only because the material is quite foreign to me. Please then be so kind as to allow me a few more days. I hope to be able to write more extensively next Sunday. This semester it is not just the university that is tugging at me; it’s Leibniz, as well as important and time-consuming faculty meetings, which I have to attend as the representative of non-tenured faculty. Besides, you know how difficult I find it to write to anybody—not just to you.

If you are asking specifically about manner of writing and composition, then I can only repeat from memory what I already mentioned, namely that I would find it advantageous in terms of *composition* for the methodological discussions to be at the end (as an appendix), so that the introduction, which begins very excitingly, would immediately be continued in the substantive [inhaltlichen] discussions of the “state of nature” etc. I very much approve of the “manner of writing,” narrowly speaking (style, diction). You know how highly I esteem your talent also apparent elsewhere in this regard (e.g. in the Schmitt review).

Apart from these “formal declarations,” I hope that you are well again [dass Sie wieder gut sind]. I, for my part, send my heartfelt regards—also from my wife.

Yours,  
G. Krüger

## 24

Marburg, 4 December 1932.

Dear Mr. Strauss,

Now that my wife has deciphered the most difficult passages from your 17 November letter, I can finally reply to them in more detail. To begin with,



once more the question of *form*. I want to add to what I said two days ago: you must however probably leave the first chapter in place. The only thing that I find impeding access to your work is really just the difficult §1. Perhaps you could present it in a shortened form that leaves aside discussion and comparison of texts (as said before, treated separately as an excursus) and only treats it *in terms of the subject matter* (man's place within the world and at the same time the key point of it) in order to briefly explain your starting from the "anthropological." Thus, I am thinking of it having more the character of theses; historically it would suffice to present the double orientation of Hobbesian politics *as a problem*. That is really all I "find fault with."

As concerns the (in itself completely clearly presented) *content*, the best way to continue that discussion is probably to address your letter.

"The second cave." I find this analogy to be a very fitting description of our intellectual condition, if one begins from your equation ancient = natural = correct. For myself, however, I must say that I cannot accept this equation without reservation, and even if I let it stand for the time being I have to ask: 1) are the chains by which we are bound in the "second cave" made of the same metal as those in the first cave? 2) what leader can loosen them and show the way upward? I would answer the first question in the negative, and take the second to be unanswerable because I consider the metal of the "second" chain to be so strong that the entire analogy thereby becomes invalid: If one understands why we are sitting in the second cave, then it is impossible to understand this "prison" as a floor of the *Platonic* prison. Looking back from here it is rather the *Platonic* position that becomes in need of revision. *The problem of "prejudice" is, after all, more radical than that of the δόξα* (to use your words). The concept of "naturalness" and of "being human" must therefore be determined starting from here. The unity of the concepts "science" and "philosophy" is not as directly graspable (by taking antiquity as the standard [in der Messung an der Antike]) as you suppose. I certainly understand your motive of combatting historicism, but in my opinion one cannot shake it off by defiantly ignoring it (and you do not really [im Grunde] do this), but by reducing it to its substantive/factual [sachliche] and historical core: Christ's factual domination/dominion [Herrschaft] over the spirit of post-ancient humanity. However, this dominion has become indirect in modernity; yet it is you who take it to be factually unbroken by claiming that the "situation" of modern thought is essentially determined by opposition to revealed religion. Now, the denaturing of the Christian "bondage"

of humans in historicism is undoubtedly a special kind of imprisonment: there can be philosophical liberation from this cave. But when you define the second cave as the original *ground* of historicism, then there is no Socrates for this just as there is no Newton for a blade of grass. You proceed consistently by “naïvely” claiming the openness of the “things themselves” to our eyes [Blick]. But your language betrays you: this naïveté for you is a *demand* that is by no means naïve, and your concrete mode of research shows that the demand cannot be carried out. The “naturalness” of thinking that is indeed essential to philosophy cannot, in my view, simply be possessed or aimed at—neither by you nor by anyone else. Our factual unnaturalness makes it such that the naturalness must be a *problem*.

I think that this question contains the source of our differences. What you replied to me in terms of content and method on the theme of “vanity” probably doesn’t require discussion. I’ve said too much and must first await the progress of your book.

Your program in fact contains an engagement with the questions that I have touched upon here. Would you not like to anticipate some of these topics through correspondence? Let me know, please, how you have received my letters; I would like to know if this critique is useful to you.

Cordial greetings,

Yours,

G. Krüger

25A

Paris, 12 December 1932.

[first draft of the letter from 27 December 1932]

Dear Mr. Krüger,

Many thanks for both your letters! Of course I am not “angry” with you. I was only somewhat unsatisfied with your previous letter a) because you had left unanswered the personally so important question about the clarity of my presentation, and b) because in regard to the central argument of my thesis you presented your thesis in such a way that I saw no possibility of engagement with you. With your latest letter you were so kind as to remove completely these difficulties. I am very grateful for this, and am especially grateful to you and your wife for undergoing the effort to decipher my hard-to-read handwriting. I will try to write more clearly today and in the future. Now on to the subject!

“The second cave”—our difference is grounded in the fact that I cannot believe [glauben], that I must therefore look for a possibility of *living* without faith [Glaube]. There are two possibilities of this sort: the ancient, i.e. Socratic-Platonic, and the modern one, i.e. the Enlightenment (implying the possibilities offered by Hobbes and Kant, above all others). One must therefore ask: who is right, the ancients or the newer ones? The *querelle des anciens et des modernes* must be repeated.

Now, I tend to believe in the advantage of the ancients. I only wish to recall *one* point, one that we do not dispute about and that is basically impossible to dispute. It is true of modern philosophy that without Biblical faith [Glaube] one could not and cannot enter into it, and especially not into its “atheism,” and with faith one cannot remain in it. It fundamentally lives by grace of a factum [Faktums] that corrodes it. “Modern philosophy” is thus only possible as long as faith in the Bible has not been shaken in its foundations. But since and on account of Nietzsche that has been the case. There is also a Christian heritage in Nietzsche—but Nietzsche himself clearly distinguished between the trans-Christian ideal for the recognition of which he wanted to pave the way and which preserves nothing of Christianity, and the (secularized-) Christian attitude of “probity” [Redlichkeit] that guided him in his critique of Christianity and which as such is only necessary and possible as long as there still is a Christianity to be combated.

Nietzsche was the first and the only one to distinguish between the “secularized” ideal and an “integral,” “natural,” unpolemical ideal within his own philosophy. That ideal of “probity” *on its own* motivates the historical (-psychological) critique—Nietzsche’s actual ideal has no other relation to history than that developed for instance in the 2<sup>nd</sup> *Untimely Meditation*, i.e. no other relation in the end than the one on the basis of which human beings have always “naïvely” written history.

You will find that Nietzsche’s own ideal contains enough “secularized Christianity” to show my position as absurd. I admit this fact, but have my doubts about the conclusion drawn from it against me. I rather believe that Nietzsche never broke away from certain Christian “tendencies of thought” because he, after tearing down the pillars of the European world and revealing the ὕλη of this world, i.e. after opting, “in *one* hatred and breath,”<sup>42</sup> in favor of Homer and Pericles against Socrates-Plato *and* in favor of the Israelite-Jewish kings (or for the Caesar) against the prophets (or against Jesus and Paul), in other words after rediscovering the “*natural*” ideal of humanity—the ideal of ἀνδρεία—he did not proceed to an

*unbelieving* critique of this ideal. Nietzsche went back *behind* philosophy, and at the same time he avowed it. He most fiercely battled “mind” [Geist] and affirmed it most passionately. This vacillating, this fundamental lack of clarity could only be overcome by proceeding to Platonic philosophy. (Nietzsche confronted modern Enlightenment’s *denial* [Leugnung] of ἀνδρεία with the position of ἀνδρεία.)

In short: Modern philosophy, taken to its *conclusion*, seems to me to lead to the point at which Socrates *begins*. Modern philosophy thus proves to be a violent “destruction [*Destruktion*] of tradition,” but not a “progress.” But it has clearly understood itself to be progressive, and that leads to the irredeemable complicatedness and lack of clarity and lack of radicality of which the term “second cave” was supposed to be an indication.

## 25B

[fragment of a draft of the letter from 27 December 1932]

The problem of the “second cave” is the problem of historicism. The “substantive [sachliche] and historical core” of historicism is, as you correctly state, “Christ’s factual domination/dominion [Herrschaft] over humanity post-antiquity.” What follows from this for the one who does not *believe*? There are just two possible consequences: a) Heidegger’s consequence—although Christianity is “false,” it has brought to light facts about human beings that were not adequately known to humanity in antiquity; at least it understood these facts more deeply than antiquity had; it is “*deeper*” than ancient philosophy; therefore the understanding of historicity first made possible by Christianity is a “*more radical*” understanding (as you put it: “The problem of ‘prejudice’ is, after all, *more radical* than that of the δόξα”). Fundamentally: the philosophy still and first made possible by the collapse of Christianity preserves the “truth” of Christianity; that is why it is deeper and more radical than Greek philosophy.

b) Against this consequence there arises the suspicion that it always just leads to a “secularization,” thus to a position one cannot enter into without Christianity and in which one can’t remain with Christianity.<sup>43</sup> Thus, one has to ask oneself: Is there not a simply a-Christian philosophy? In other words: Is not ancient philosophy—be it Platonic or Aristotelian—the philosophy? Admitting the greater *depth* of Christian and post-Christian philosophy—is depth even the point? Is this aspect (depth) not already a

Christian viewpoint itself in need of expulsion? Is “depth” in fact identical with radicality? Is it not perhaps the case that “depth” is not *actually* radical?

Let me exemplify the matter using Hobbes! Hobbes claims to be deeper than Aristotle (and Plato). What is behind this claim? He does not pose the question concerning the εἶδος (be it the question concerning the essence of ἀρετή, be it the question concerning human sociability); he presumes it to be already answered, the answer to be “trivial,” and, examining himself, asks to what extent he, the human being, can do justice to the (dogmatically presupposed) standard [Maßstab].

## 25C

Hotel Racine

23 rue Racine, Paris (6<sup>th</sup> arr.)

Paris, 16 December 1932.

[second draft of the letter from 27 December 1932]

Dear Mr. Krüger,

Thank you for your letter! I am answering it immediately because if I did not, I would not be able to write for a considerable time, as I will be very busy in the time to come. Given the importance and interesting nature of your comments on my Hobbes sketch, however, I cannot wait that long. I am also writing so promptly in the hopes that you will reply (or offer a rejoinder) soon. I kindly ask you to do so. Don’t forget that there is no one in all of Paris with whom I could fruitfully discuss these questions! Ad rem then [to the matter]!

I will begin with the remark at the end of your letter about my critique of Dilthey. Is it that difficult to understand? I mean, in analyzing natural right one cannot already *presuppose* its critique, and an analysis of natural right (e.g., Hobbes’ understanding of it) only makes sense if it *itself* stands in service of the question concerning natural right. The historical question concerning the preconditions of natural right is, in any case, secondary. I want to be more precise: the original fact is a *given* law, as even psychoanalysis involuntarily confirms; a law that need not be sought in the first place. Somewhere on earth, at some point in time, human beings saw themselves deprived of such a law and therefore *inquired* about a law, i.e. about *the natural* law that would be valid for *human beings* as such. Since then philosophy has been in existence, for the disappearance [Wegfall] of

the given law and the search for *the* law seems to me to mark philosophy. Socratic-Platonic philosophy inquired about order, it even inquired about “the laws.” Until proven wrong I would maintain that it is *the* philosophy for this reason, and that all other philosophies can only be understood as leading to it or as originating from it. For every other philosophy presupposes in one way or another that the βίος θεωρητικός is the right βίος—for Socrates-Plato, however, it is precisely this presupposition that is problematic. (That is why Nietzsche’s critique of the philosophy of Socrates is without force.) Perhaps Plato’s attempt failed—I do not know, but I do not believe so. In that case, there is the possibility that there is a *given* law that stands up to the critique Plato directed against Lycurgus and Minos, and that also fulfills what Plato merely demands or promises. This law is (according to the view of the Arabic and Jewish philosophers of the Middle Ages) the *revealed* law. But—rightly or wrongly—at the outset of modernity *fundamentally* the same situation arises again regarding the revealed law that existed regarding the divine laws of Lycurgus and Minos in the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. And that is why the comparison between Socrates and e.g. Hobbes is *fundamentally* justified.

The *differences* are great, some of them are obvious. But I do not think that a radical analysis of these differences is possible if one does not hold onto the *fundamental* identity and allow the differences to show against this background. You ask: whether Hobbes’ “foundation of liberalism” is really identical to the Socratic intention? Of course *not*! Socrates liberal—that would indeed be something! But that is precisely the *question*: how can a reasonable human being, a philosopher (!), be liberal or be a founder of liberalism? Or, more pointedly: how can a philosopher represent sophistic doctrines? (After all, the Platonic dialogues have made clear that this should in principle be impossible.) First, then, one has to note that Hobbes is a *philosopher*, not a “practical politician,” and also not an historian, a prudent *observer*, like Thucydides, but a *questioning* human being, i.e., one who inquires into the “*order of human things*.” Thus it does not seem to me to be, as you think, “a very indirect identity if you [sc. I] find an interest in political *science* on both sides” (your emphasis). You continue: “This is obvious in the differences in mathematics then and now (cf. Klein).” The difference between modern and ancient mathematics is not relevant to this initial approach; this difference can also not be understood until it’s been established what the formal approaches (if you will) have in common.

(With regard to the question of justifying the *direct* confrontation of Socrates and Hobbes, Klein, by the way, shares my opinion.)

It is becoming more and more clear to me that a fundamental characterization of modern thought is *only* possible through confrontation with ancient thought (not for instance, as I believe, with Christian thought). Yet in order to confront I need a *tertium comparationis*. I know of none other than this, namely that both ancient as well as modern philosophy wants to be—philosophy. Is that formal?

You say that Socrates and Hobbes meet in the *problem* of humility [Bescheidenheit]. You thus opine that the *answers* are completely different. I admit that, of course. But *why* are the answers different? Because, from the outset, they *inquire* about virtue in a completely different way. But they both *inquire* about virtue, and we for our part must ask which question—the Socratic or the Hobbesian—is more originary [ursprüngliche] and adequate. Yet this comparison is only possible because they are united in the fact that they both inquire. (Incidentally, I believe to have left no doubt in my work that Hobbes precisely does *not* begin with the Socratic question, but with a very different question about the *material* [Material] from which the virtuous person must be fabricated, a question that is only possible if the Socratic question is assumed to be *already answered*. I am now elaborating this further by showing that the greater “depth” of knowledge of human nature to which Hobbes lays claim consists in the fact that he *only* inquires about the material—the Socratic question about the εἶδος or the Aristotelian question about sociability, respectively, simply disappear for him—that he so to speak *bore*s himself into his investigation of the material. This ontological materialism is the same as what Klein analyzes as reflectiveness [Reflektiertheit]. It has to be demonstrated furthermore how Hobbes tries to make himself independent [unabhängig] of the neglect of the Socratic question by attempting to derive order solely from the material—more precisely, from the “matter and artificer.”<sup>44</sup>)

Back when I was writing the Ebbinghaus review, you agreed with my thesis about the “second cave.” In principle, then, we are in agreement. Did I then express myself so unclearly that you do not recognize the fact that my orientation of my understanding of Hobbes by way of Socrates is an attempt to take this aperçu seriously? Did I once again write so intricately, as in my Spinoza book? Please, do tell me!

## 25D

New address:

7 Square Grangé

22 rue de la Glacière

Paris (13<sup>th</sup> arr.)

27 December 1932.

[the definitive letter]

Dear Mr. Krüger,

Please forgive me for leaving your letter unanswered for so long. It was certainly not your letter's fault, which on the contrary demanded an immediate reply—and in fact, I have a whole stack of letter drafts—but a series of circumstances the listing of which I don't want to tire you with. I will limit myself to assuring you that I am not "*angry*" with you and never was, that I was merely *unsatisfied* with your previous letter because I did not know from what basis you were opposing me. Now on to our subject, i.e. the "second cave."

The root of our difference is that I cannot *believe*, and that I am therefore searching for a possibility of *living* without faith, whereas you assume that such a possibility does not exist—or exists no longer? Yet since you do not assume this dogmatically, since you must rather want to *show* that the possibility I seek does not exist, you must allow me to execute my attempt so that it will *evidently* fail.

The problem of the "second cave" is the problem of historicism. The "substantive and historical core" of historicism is, *as you correctly state*, "Christ's factual domination/dominion [Herrschaft] over post-classical humanity." What follows for the one who does *not* believe, who thus denies the right, i.e. the divine right, of this domination?

The most proximate [nächstliegende] consequence—Heidegger's, among others—is: Christianity has brought to light facts about human life that were not known or not known sufficiently to classical philosophy; at least it understood these facts more *deeply* than the ancients; therefore the understanding of historicity first made possible by Christianity is a *deeper*, in this sense a *more radical* understanding of human beings—as you put it: "The problem of 'prejudice,' after all, is *more radical* than that of the δόξα."—Fundamentally: the philosophy still possible, and first made possible, after the decay of Christianity preserves the "truth" of Christianity. That is why it is deeper and more radical than classical philosophy.



Perhaps this consequence is correct—in any case, it must be proven to be so. But that is only possible through *direct* confrontation of modern with classical philosophy. This much about the legitimation of my way of proceeding regarding Hobbes—I mean the direct confrontation with Plato—even if my thesis about the “second cave”—which, without any proof, is nothing but an aperçu—should be false.

You say: the “ground” [Boden] from which Hobbes and Socrates respectively inquire is different. Admittedly, yes—but this “ground” has to be explained, to be addressed. It is addressed when one confronts the initial question of the modern and of the Greek and analyzes it with a view to its presuppositions. A simple *depiction* of the “ground” or the “situation” would not achieve anything.

I stated that the most proximate consequence of modern unbelief is the assumption: post-Christian philosophy represents a *progress* over against classical philosophy even if Christianity is not “*true*.” Against this consequence there arises the suspicion that it always just leads to “secularizations,” i.e. to positions that one cannot enter into without Christianity and in which one cannot remain *with* it. Thus, one has to ask oneself: Is there not a simply a-Christian philosophy? Is ancient philosophy—be it Platonic or Aristotelian—not *the* philosophy? Even admitting the greater *depth* of post-Christian philosophy—but is depth the point? Is the viewpoint of depth not itself already a Christian viewpoint that needs to be expelled? Is depth identical with radicality? Is it not perhaps the case that “depth” is not *actually* radical?

Depth has its home in introspection. Introspection presupposes a standard [Maßstab]. The question of the standard is the radical question. I find that the moderns neglected this radical question to the degree [in dem Maße] that they apparently or actually promoted introspection.

It may be that modern reflection or introspection or depth has disclosed [erschlossen] not merely unrelated facts, but instead a whole dimension not disclosed to the Greeks. However, one can then still ask what “dignity” accords to this dimension. Is it really a *more radical* dimension? Do we really know more about the roots of life, about the questionability of life, than the Greeks? Or is it only the case that something has lodged itself in front of *the* radical dimension that was the sole object of Greek philosophy, which forces a reflective propaedeutic on us?

I do not even deny that *we must* philosophize historically, i.e. raise facts to consciousness that the Greeks did not have to raise to consciousness. I do not even deny that for us, “naïvete” is merely a demand, that no human

being today can philosophize “naïvely.” But I ask: Is this change a result of us fundamentally knowing more than the Greeks (that the question of “prejudice” is *more radical* than that of the δόξα), or is it fundamentally, i.e., for the knowledge of what the human being as such must know, unproductive, a hateful fatality that forces us into an “unnatural” detour?

Do you remember the first page of Schiller’s “Naïve and Sentimental Poetry”? The naïve human being *is* nature—for the sentimental human being, naturalness is just a *demand*. We moderns are necessarily “sentimental.” But that means that we must inquire in a “sentimental” manner—i.e. in a remembering, historical fashion—what the Greeks “naïvely” inquired about. More precisely: by “memory” we must bring ourselves into the dimension in which we, understanding the Greeks, can question “naïvely” with them.

The “accomplishment” of modernity is not a more radical dimension, a more radical cure of the human illness, so to speak, or at least a more radical diagnosis, but instead the *modern* remedy for the *modern* illness.

I am aware of the inadequacy of these formulations. I would be happy if I had made clear to you that I assert the impossibility of “naïve” philosophy in our world as much as you do, that I only, however, really, depart from you in that I don’t view this impossibility in *any* sense as progress.

Write me and tell me what your objections are.

With cordial greetings to your wife and to you,

Yours,

Leo Strauss.

P.S.: Please be so kind as to give Gadamer my new address, and to tell him that I thank him for his card and that I am in no way upset with him, but instead very happy to hear from him soon about my work.

## 26

Marburg, 29 December 1932.

Zeppelinstrasse 23.

Dear Mr. Strauss,

Your letter today for once reached me in a more leisurely state; therefore I’m replying right away.

We agree on the historical situation of our thinking. You, too, are convinced about “the impossibility of ‘naïve’ philosophy in our world,” and you understand this impossibility just as I do: as grounded in the

domination/dominion [Herrschaft] of Christ. Yet while you assume that I recognize the legitimacy [Recht] of this factual domination/dominion, you say that you deny it. You consider what can be done under these circumstances, and rightly find fault with that “preservation” of the “truth” of Christianity that is characteristic of modern philosophy—a philosophy of introspection and of “depth.” You, on the other hand, are looking for a “decidedly non-Christian philosophy” whose radicality need not consist in “depth.” Speaking in positive terms, you state that the question of the standard of introspection is more radical than introspection.

I agree with you on this last point: I, *too*, find that the moderns have buried the problem of the standard with *their* introspection, but at the same time I also think that antiquity, insofar as it posed this problem—and here we both have Socrates and Plato in mind—already pursued it in the direction of the problem of the “law” in revealed religion. Augustine’s Platonism—I don’t know if this applies to the Platonism of the Jews and Arabs as well—is really Platonic: the legitimate repetition of the Platonic problem within the horizon of revelation. (Aside from Platonic philosophy, antiquity is not—or not primarily—concerned with the question of the standard in the way we both understand it.)

Now it is important to pose this “unmodern” question about the standard again *today*, i.e. within the horizon of “secularization.” I do think that this question, as well as the ancient “basis,” are in need not merely of being “depicted,” but “analyzed.” That is precisely what I aim to do when I trace the problem of historicism and of “sentimental” thinking back to its Christian origin. In certain contexts, it may be necessary to confront modern philosophers *directly* with Plato—as I in fact do. But it is clear that one must have—or that one always already *has*—a notion [Vorstellung] of what lies in between. You too, have a notion, namely the one that was established at the outset, I think. Our difference, however, you see in the fact that you “cannot believe.” I hope you will not interpret it as flippant or insolent if I respond: that really doesn’t matter. Your faith or lack thereof is something purely personal here. (Perhaps I may say that you really are an “unbeliever,” but not one who is indifferent.<sup>45</sup>) Thus, I speak just as little of *my* personal belief or unbelief. For us as philosophers it does not matter whether we believe, for it does not matter whether or how we manage to “live.” Not ‘it concerns you’ [*tua res agitur*],<sup>46</sup> but ‘I know not whether this is true’ [*utrum verum sit*]. Maybe we cannot bear the truth and cannot manage to do the sole true thing [das einzig Wahre]; that does not affect this true thing itself. Thus, to your statement concerning the

“modern situation,” I would like to respond: it is philosophically false to begin from the question of one’s own life and belief. This question of “introspection” is secondary; as you say, it presupposes the question of the standard. By formulating [ansetzen] your problem one step too late, at the problem of belief or unbelief, you assume the question of the standard to be solved. You orient yourself—even if negatively—with reference to revealed religion. Only on this basis can you understand the historical situation as you do; only on this basis are you as convinced as I am of the *impossibility* of naïve philosophy. This view of things which initially appears to be merely *historical*, on which we agree, in principle contains the recognition that the fact [Factum] of revealed religion is of absolute significance for any question concerning standard, world, etc. You would have to view history far more “formlessly” if you really were to deny this *in principle*, i.e. if you were to view something other than revealed religion—say, the cosmos—as the absolutely meaningful [das absolut Bedeutsame]. Yet I do not know how, in that case, one should understand the fact of history and ourselves. Philosophically, the matter seems to be such that we must repeat the ancient and genuine philosophical questions, but in the insurmountable factual [faktische] situation that philosophizing is no longer as self-evident [selbstverständlich] as it was then. This *new* thing, this newly arisen problem for philosophy, can only be posed within a philosophy of world history, but that means in the analysis of the ground of “reflection” that is *originally* discovered in the face of revelation. Now, one can experience this as a “hateful fatality” or as a glimmer of hope in the night of our perplexity—that is simply a matter of our “worldview” and our personal ability of *doing* anything in this condition. But if one wanted to claim to find the true and *nonarbitrarily* authoritative [das Wahre und unwillkürlich Maßgebende] somewhere else, we would have to understand ourselves worse than we two do [sich schlechter verstehen als wir zwei es tun]. One would have to be “clueless”—as you will admit—in the way that e.g. Löwith is and as most contemporaries are, the stupid and the intelligent. But you know better, and that is why for you the search for an atheistic philosophy is the δεῦτερος πλοῦς<sup>47</sup> that is *incapable* of ignoring the old ἀγαθόν in its rank.

Dixi. I am glad that my worry about your relationship with me was unfounded. My wife sends her greetings, as do I.

Yours,  
G. Krüger.

## 27

Paris, 7 February 1933.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

Please forgive me for leaving the letter you wrote at the year's end unanswered for so long. I think you will absolve me when you learn the reason. I am about to get *married*, to Ms. Mirjam Petry, whom you and your wife met at Mrs. Her[r]mann's New Year's party 1931/32. I don't have to tell you about Ms. Petry's lot [Schicksal], as I'm sure Klein told you everything back then. In any case—now you know why I didn't write, and you won't misinterpret my silence.—

You accuse me of doing something “philosophically false” by beginning with the fact of my unbelief (“it is philosophically false to begin from the question of one's own life and belief”); and that I formulate [ansetze] my “problem one step too late,” that is, not with the problem of truth but with that of my own belief or unbelief.—I would respond: I don't *know* anything, but merely *opine*. First, I want to gain clarity about what I opine (and my δόξα is atheism), what this opinion is about, what makes it problematic, in order to get, by questioning, on the path that might lead me to some knowledge. I do not believe that therein I place too much importance on my “personal opinion”—ultimately, after all, it isn't even my own private opinion but the opinion of the times that one can only overcome if one understands it and sees through it, and that in fact, perhaps, proves to be consistent in one aspect or another. And in so doing I am meeting the demand that one cannot simply ignore one's situation, this demand that you have placed on me.

Furthermore, you write: “Philosophically, the matter seems to be such that we must repeat the ancient and *genuinely philosophical* questions, but in the new insurmountable factual situation.”—So we agree that the ancient questions are the *genuinely* philosophical questions. We are arguing about the character of modern questions. And I think that these modern questions, measured by the ancient ones, are not genuinely philosophical, but merely *propaedeutic*, even if the propaedeutic that we need is a hundred times more extensive, complicated, and reflective than the actual παιδεύμα. But let me emphasize: this is only an opinion, a supposition (not entirely unfounded, I hope), not real knowledge. Once I understand Plato better than I do now I hope to be able to say more about our point of contention, i.e., to either agree with you or to be able to rigorously ground my opinion.

I am re-reading the *Protagoras*<sup>48</sup> again with a few acquaintances (among them Koyré). I thought I understood this dialogue that I have already read many times; and yet how much—how much of importance—have I overlooked. It's only now become clear to me what the myth of the *Protagoras* means: this “Epimethian” natural philosophy as the basis of the justification of the Athenian democracy—i.e., in a world that arises without plan or order, everything human is in order [in Ordnung] (Socrates can be glad to live among Athenians and not among the wild), whereas in truth it is the case that, in a world produced through planning, the human realm is precisely *not* in order [nicht in Ordnung]. This shows how, in principle, modern naturalism is identical to ancient naturalism. —But the knowledge of human order and factual human disorder is not tied to a prior knowledge of φύσις, as is sufficiently shown by the limitation to the δευτερος πλους in the *Phaedo* and the mythical character of the *Timaeus*, whereas the combated sophistic view naively presupposes a naturalistic cosmology.—

How far along are you, by the way, with your Leibniz introduction? I was just working a little bit on Leibniz again in recent days, as I have to write an introduction to a piece by Mendelssohn—a kind of treatment of Leibniz's *Causa Dei*<sup>49</sup>—for the Mendelssohn edition. §215 of the *Theodicy* is quite “illuminating,” where Leibniz's difference with the actual Enlightenment is expressed in the clear formula *beauté (ordre)—commodité*; also §73: the justification of retributive justice, which reveals the same difference with the actual Enlightenment. By the way, I think there is also a good remark on this point in volume 8 of Dilthey's *Gesammelte Schriften*.—

Gilson is in Paris again. He is lecturing on a) St. Bernhard b) Scotus Eriugena. The lectures are very good, extraordinarily good, very clear and at the same time very rigorous. In the most recent lecture that I attended, [he gave] an exceptional clarification of the concept of love in Bernard, of the going together of the “disinterestedness” of love and the “reward” of love. Accordingly, Kant seems to have taught nothing different with respect to eudaimonism than did the Christian tradition.—

Farewell! Write again soon, and grant me absolution for my long silence!

With cordial greetings to you and your wife,

Yours,

Leo Strauss.

How is the little Krüger doing?

## 28

Paris, 14 March 1933.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

I am currently reading a book that makes me think of you constantly, and so intensely that it would almost appear an injustice not to recommend it to you emphatically. It's Gilson's *L'esprit de la philosophie médiévale* (Paris: Vrin, 1932), two volumes. (You should get Hinneberg to order it for the purpose of a review. The publisher's address is: J. Vrin, 6 Place de la Sorbonne, Paris, 5<sup>th</sup> arr.) You will enjoy much about the book. There are astounding parallels between your ideas and those of Gilson. You will also find a vast amount of literature referenced in the notes, especially French works that you might otherwise overlook. I just made note of a work that seems very interesting to me: L. Laberthonnière, *Le réalisme chrétien et l'idéalisme grec* (Paris 1904).<sup>50</sup> Gilson always proceeds by first showing a given problem's development in the Greeks and then asking what has been added to it on account of the Bible.

Let's hear from you soon!

Give my regards to your wife,

Cordially yours,

Leo Strauss.

## 29

Marburg, 19 April 1933.

Dear Mr. Strauss,

Please forgive me that I haven't written you in such a long time! You have been so very patient, and put me to shame with your kind reference to Gilson. I could have replied briefly, of course, which my wife constantly exhorted me to do. But my letters couldn't overcome Leibniz and current events. I finished Leibniz at Easter. Current events are now beginning to affect the university.

First, I want to make up for the worst neglect and congratulate you on your marriage. Your future will certainly be difficult; it will be comforting to have the Kleins there as well. *Solamen miseris*. You and Klein as "standing on the Right" are unqualifiable existences [unqualifizierbare Existenzen]: "That which must not be, cannot be."<sup>51</sup> What on earth will you do? I hope to hear something from you tomorrow through the G.s.

I would like to get to know Gilson sometime. I will ask H. about his book. Since world history will soon have put an end to liberalism everywhere, the great and real problems can finally be understood again. But it will be hard going on this ground, and one has to know what one can stand up for. You can imagine that I am becoming more dogmatic under these circumstances; I am thinking of doing so publicly.

In your February letter, you spoke about your question: you say that do not “know” anything, but only “opine.” I cannot quite believe this. A philosopher can expand the indecision very far, but it is always just a loosening up of the structure of knowledge in which one factually lives and must live. Of course, this “knowledge” is always inadequately accounted for, and in principle can never be accounted for without some fundamental obscurities. But that does not mean that it is opinion, rather it is belief. What the ancients called δόξα is, after all, just in part a conscious “mere” opining. It is mainly a presumably certain knowledge that has simply not been investigated with a view to its justification, and that is partially justifiable, partially not, partially justifiable with success, and partially refutable. The Greeks called this δόξα without any distinction, since they took fundamentally achievable ἐπιστημη to be their standard. When, due to the historical experience of the world of itself and of its historicity as such, the achievement of epistemic knowledge becomes questionable in principle, then the analysis of the situation of the question [Fragesituation] changes as well.

You seem to me to understand the “propaedeutic” character of the post-ancient problems somewhat too externally [äußerlich] after all. More precisely: your answer has made me aware that I must reflect more myself. To be sure, the “genuine” philosophical questions are the ancient ones, but I must add: that is true of the themes (e.g. that world history is not a genuine [eigentlich] philosophic theme). The way of *treating* each theme back then was *not correct*; it was impossible that it could be. Now, it could be possible. The “not correct” is a *privatio boni*, i.e. it does not mean that Plato didn’t understand anything about true philosophy, but it means indeed that he searched in a confused and incorrect way. You know that I nevertheless take Plato to represent the greatest relative approximation of the true way of research.

You can best learn about my view of Leibniz—as well as I could compose it ad hoc—from the introduction that I had to make brief and popular. I agree with you that there is a contrast between Leibniz and the actual Enlightenment. I first saw this now while I was working on it and have



generally become interested in Leibniz. I find his theory of space especially attractive, of which I don't understand much but it appears to be of the highest importance to me. In some respects he's done a better job than Kant, who is certainly Leibniz's superior in his basic orientation, but not in carrying out the critique of "reason" [des "Verstandes"]. What becomes a problem for Kant in the *Critique of Pure Reason* and, subsequently, in the *Critique of Judgment*, Leibniz treats in a unified way from the beginning. To me that is very essential, for I cannot "accept" the οὐράνιος in the ancient sense, although I also reject the self-emancipation [Verselbständigung] of consciousness and its science. Last semester—and it may sound somewhat fantastical—I presented the history of modern philosophy in this spirit, as a failed revolt within "Christian" (i.e. made possible by Christianity) philosophy; liberalism as an armistice in the wars of religion, i.e. in the dogmatically motivated wars of the West.

What will we yet experience?

My wife and I send our most cordial greetings to you and your wife. Please send her our regards.

Yours cordially,

G. Krüger.

I still haven't read your Mendelssohn introduction, but I will do so soon since I am treating the *Critique of Pure Reason*. I am also lecturing on ethics!

### 30

New address: 4 rue du Parc de Montsouris, Paris (14<sup>th</sup> arr.)  
4 rue du Parc de Montsouris, Paris (14<sup>th</sup> arr.), 17 July 1933.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

It has been three months since you last wrote to me. You can imagine why I have not written you in so long. The reason is: politics [die Politik]. The gulf that others have torn open in fact now also separates us as well, since we are not pure spirits but terrestrial descendants of terrestrial beings. It is almost like in a war...

There could have been a decent, just, *imperial* solution. The solution that has been opted for stems from hate, and it almost necessarily generates counter-hate. It will require a long, strenuous effort on my part to be able to deal with what has been inflicted on me and my kind.

So much for the reasons for my long silence; expressing these reasons will hopefully mean that this silence will not have been our last exchange [Äußerung]. —

Mrs. Herrmann visited us last week, and she brought us little Thomas. We heard from her a few things about how you and your wife are faring. You know firsthand about Klein's fate and his plans. The fact remains unchanged that we will have to continue to live in almost total isolation. Next spring we want to move to England. I want to go to John Laird in Aberdeen who, according to Gilson, is preparing a book on Hobbes.

Did you receive my Lubienski review<sup>52</sup> from Krautheimer?<sup>53</sup> It is a kind of "advance notice" of my study.

At the moment, I'm working on a treatment about "La critique religieuse de Hobbes" <sup>54</sup> as a dissertation [Diplom-Arbeit] for the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes. On this occasion I am learning things again that I once knew, and this and that that's escaped me until now. By the way, the parts on the critique of religion in the *Leviathan* are a great "aesthetic" delight: compared to the mockery of Hobbes, Bayle's or Voltaire's is downright clumsy. In general, the fact of mockery is in a certain sense, as Scripture itself teaches ("the benches of mockers"<sup>55</sup>), the center of the critique of religion. A comparison of mockery with the Platonic παιδιαζειν [διαπαιζειν] must lead to interesting results. In any case, "laughing" is an essential part of any Enlightenment, be it Platonic or modern.

You wrote a while back about the completion of your Leibniz introduction; can I see it at some point?

Before our correspondence was interrupted, we were having an argument about the sense in which modern philosophy, in contradistinction to Greek philosophy, must be "propaedeutic." Your last remark on this question leads me to think that the genuine difference between us is as follows: You claim that the achievement of epistemic [epistemisches] knowledge has become questionable in light of the historical experience of the world of itself and of its history. I must admit that I cannot make this historicism fit with what I otherwise know of your position. Do you intend to follow Aristotle in relegating the knowledge of moral things to the realm of ἐνδοξα (which, as such, can be historically variable)? But what becomes, then, of the rationally knowable *lex naturalis*, which as such is eternal? And how, on the basis of your presupposition, can one explain the harmony between the biblical law and the Platonic νομοί which we have occasionally talked about?

Farewell! Cordial greetings to you and your wife, also from my wife.

Yours,

Leo Strauss

## 31

4 rue du Parc de Montsouris, Paris (14<sup>th</sup> arr.)

Paris, 22 July 1933.

[draft not sent to Krüger]

Dear Mr. Krüger,

Rereading the letter you sent in April prompted me to think once more about our difference. Formally, this difference consists in the fact that I am determined [entschlossen] to depart from the Socratic-Platonic approach—and not just from this *approach*—only when I have understood the inadequacy of this manner of questioning, whereas you do not claim to want to forgo this insight but instead claim to possess it.

I had said that I do not *know* anything, but merely *opine*, and you said that you don't quite believe this, since the indecisiveness of my opining, no matter how far it's extended, in the end is nothing but a loosening of the structure of *knowledge* in which one factually lives and must live. In what follows, you place this knowledge itself in quotation marks, by which you seem to say that we in fact live in a world of questionable knowledge, that is, of opinion. After mentioning the almost self-evident qualification that not all pre-philosophical knowledge is truly questionable, but that it is only or especially knowledge concerning the *most important* things that is questionable (and thus opinion), you authorize me by your use of quotation marks to say that I know nothing, but merely opine. —

Now, you consider it more correct to say: "I believe" than "I opine." Since I, be it opine, be it believe, that one should resist the principle/beginnings [*principiis obstare*], I am hesitant to follow you. Your objection forces me to ask on the ground of which presupposition the distinction between believing and opining becomes relevant.

*Questioning* begins when that "structure of knowledge" in which we live shows itself to be brittle and full of gaps. Our generation, for example, has grown up in the structure of liberal-democratic knowledge, which for its part points to something like "Bolshevism." We have seen: this whole modern world is cracking at all seams. The opponents of *this* modern world, I mean those who act, propose solutions that are no less "modern" and hence in principle have to lead to the same negative result (e.g., cf. Mussolini's Encyclopedia article on the state). We therefore are inclined to try solutions that are in principle unmodern, i.e. concretely: old solutions. Now, due to certain modern "accomplishments," the old solutions that

are within our practical purview are exposed to considerable doubts (cf. your *οὐκ ἔστιν* objection to the ancient solution and my miracle objection to the Jewish-Christian solution). It is thus highly questionable whether it's possible to "succeed" [ob man damit durchkommt] with those old solutions. In light of these immense difficulties no knowledge is at first possible, only surmising and questioning. In this sense I understand my *option* for the political right as not-knowing (nicht-wissen) but opining. If, however, someone "believes" in "right" [rechte] ideals, he may be more suitable for all possible *actions*—yet it remains the case that he merely opines, and does not know.

On this path we will then not arrive at any legitimate distinction of opinion and belief, and I want to claim in general that ideals are never a matter of belief, but a matter either of knowledge or opinion. To believe is to believe *someone*, and an ideal is not someone. Further: to believe someone that his ideal is the right one is merely to opine that his ideal is the right one. How, then, does "faith" come about?

Assuming we *knew* what was right, *this* knowledge would not suffice to *do* what is right. To use the Augustinian example: in order to obey the commandment of honoring one's parents, I have to know who my parents are. But I *cannot* genuinely know this, only believe it. But I also don't merely opine it—for what I believe in this way is not an object of serious doubt.

## 32

Marburg, 3 October 1933.

Dear Mr. Strauß,

If it is possible, please forgive me for not yet responding to your July letter. The reasons for this are the same trivial ones that you have always known regarding myself. But in this case I am especially sorry not to have mastered my "vice of procrastination." After all, you were in a more difficult situation and managed to write anyway. That was very important to me, and I am grateful for it. With a view to the things that occupy us, it mustn't be otherwise anyway. It is too bad that we cannot talk about them at length. I had to wrack my brains about it in my ethics course—a difficult task, substantively and pedagogically. One experiences the opacity of the future and the "decision" very differently than one used to. For me, the question always comes down to the place of the church [*locus de ecclesia*]. But there the difficulties are horrendous, too.

I received your review of Lubienski, and find your view expressed with heightened clarity. As to the matter I dare not say *more*. Could I read your dissertation? I hope all of this serves to stabilize your future. Having a family now you need it all the more.

We went to the Bavarian mountains for recreation, housed somewhat primitively, but in beautiful scenery, visiting Lake Starnberg at the end. Later I had a lot of work with the corrections to the Leibniz edition. Hopefully it will soon make its way into your hands—augmented by a prooemium by my protector that doesn't much appeal to me—you will see. Also my Descartes essay must appear soon.

I am reading Thomas for my winter seminar on questions on the boundary of philosophy and theology [Grenzfragen der Philosophie und Theologie]. There is much *more* Augustine in him than I thought until now—everything that distinguishes him from the original Aristotle in the first place.—I intend to do a seminar on the *Phaedo* with Gadamer.

Our external condition has somewhat improved recently since in place of my stipend I have received a lectureship for the aforementioned course. It's the same in Gadamer's case. But of course we are now a "growing" family—Lorenz is one year old now,—and how else the university might change we don't know. What's your view on Heidegger, on C. Schmitt? It surprised us greatly here that Gogarten has become a "German Christian."<sup>56</sup>

Many cordial greetings from our house to yours, asking you to forgive me and to write soon.

Yours,  
G. Kr.

### 33

269 rue St. Jacques, Paris (5<sup>th</sup> arr.), 3 December 1933.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

Now I have again let two months pass before answering your letter. This is all the sadder because now I cannot any longer express my joy about your letter as well as I could have when I first received it. What was a gratifying surprise at the time—namely, that our commercium has remained unchanged—has by now become a gratifying matter of course. And matters of course cannot be received and expressed in as lively a way as surprises.

I didn't have time to write letters, and don't have it now. Metaphorically speaking I have one foot in England already: we are probably moving there the first week of January. I am really just awaiting Gilson's return from Canada in order to ask him for a recommendation or something similar for England. My head spins with a hundred plans none of which will likely come to fruition: England, USA, Palestine. France is totally out of the question—partly because of the fact that I'm considered a "Nazi" here.

Do you know any scholars in England? And if you do, could you send me letters of introduction to take along? And do you think I can turn to Frank for this? I am placing some hope in the author of the history of the problem of knowledge, who, as you probably know, is now in Oxford.<sup>57</sup> Schaefer<sup>58</sup> in Berlin sent me a magnificent letter of recommendation.

My work on Hobbes' critique of religion is still far from finished. I won't submit it as a dissertation [Diplomarbeit] after all. I learned quite a bit in the process, especially concerning filiations and the technique of critique of religion.

In your letter you announced your Leibniz and your Descartes pieces. Have they still not appeared yet?

I found out through Löwith that Klein and Mrs. Hermann are in Marburg. Please send them my cordial greetings. I think that Klein will write again from Prague. Did he give you my Guttmann critique<sup>59</sup>?

With cordial greetings from my wife and from me, to your wife and to you.

Yours,

Leo Strauss.

Do you know V. Brochard's essays on Epicurus<sup>60</sup>? They are quite extraordinary (aside from their "systematic" parts) and, I think, as interesting for you as they are for me.

### 34

269 rue St. Jacques, 7 December 1933.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

An urgent, highly confidential (obviously not to Klein, in case he is in Marburg as well), and hopefully not too far-reaching request or inquiry!

I just found out that I there is a chance for me to get the chair for Jewish-medieval philosophy in Jerusalem. There is only one "rival"—a certain Rawidowicz<sup>61</sup> who published a huge tome on Feuerbach and the

like, a student of Heinrich Maier's<sup>62</sup> (sic!), a totally incompetent fellow, but one who unfortunately speaks and writes Hebrew exceptionally well, which I unfortunately am totally incapable of—. The Hebrew University of Jerusalem has now decided to follow the recommendation of a panel consisting of three men: an American who doesn't know anything about me, Guttman (my former boss), and—Buber,<sup>63</sup> I believe I can assume that Buber thinks more “highly” of me than of my “rival.” But it is not out of the question that he might have a certain animosity against me, since certain pleasantries [einige Liebenswürdigkeiten] that I on occasion took the liberty to express have certainly been related to him, and he is exceptionally vain. It is for me now “do or die” [in German: nur geht es für mich jetzt um die Wurst; literally “it is all about the sausage”], or, if you like, German beefsteak.<sup>64</sup> Thus, I am asking you if you think there is any way of intervening with Buber that does not indebt me to Buber. I thought of Bultmann,<sup>65</sup> but he unfortunately does not even know me. It's quite sensitive, and all the more so because I am obliged to treat the communications of my Jerusalem benefactors confidentially—if not formally obliged, it's implied that I do so. Everything would depend on your standing with Bultmann and his standing with Buber. Would it make sense for you to show Bultmann my Guttman review (which Klein has hopefully given you in the meantime), or anything else that would give Bultmann a sense of how I think of “the matter”?

Dear Mr. Krüger! Please do not be upset that I am so readily asking you for a possibly unimaginably big favor. But you know that I am in a situation that isn't exactly easy. So please just write to let me know whether you think what I have in mind is a possibility or not.

My wife and I send our greetings to you and your wife.

Yours,

Leo Strauss.

P.S.: Again, Mr. Krüger, please take this letter in the right way!

### 35

269 rue St. Jacques, Paris (5<sup>th</sup> arr.), 29 December 1933.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

I just received the letter I included that is intended for Klein and that is of the *utmost* urgency. Please pass it on to him. Since I don't know his address and since I assume that you know it, I ask you to please send it to him as soon as possible. It really is urgent.

Will I hear from you before my move to England (on 7 January)?

My greetings to you and your family, and a Happy New Year to all of you.

Yours,

Leo Strauss.

P.S.: In my rush I almost forgot to thank you for your outstanding and very exciting Descartes essay.<sup>66</sup> If I haven't written to you about it yet, it's only because it is occupying me so much. The parallels with Hobbes are astounding. You will thus not be able to avoid Hobbes, either. Pardon me this ride on my hobbyhorse. The only remark I wish to make on the subject is that I would not speak of the *theological* presupposition of universal doubt: you correct yourself by ultimately replacing "omnipotence [Allmacht]" with "unfathomable superiority [Übermacht]." To be sure, the problem still returns, but in another way. More from England.—I have sent the 2<sup>nd</sup> copy to Gilson by mail. He isn't coming back from Canada until 12 January, so I won't see him again.

### 36

Marburg, August 5, 1934.

Dear Mr. Strauss,

Now you haven't heard from me in so long that you're probably wondering about me. Despite the length of my silence, though, the reasons haven't changed (in terms of Hegel's categories, I would have to say: also this quantum [Quantum] designates no "nodal point" ["Knotenpunkt"] and no qualitative change, since my "measure" [Maß] is very large). I hope you are well. What is happening with Hobbes's literary remains? Your piece on the critique of religion?

This summer, I substituted for Kroner<sup>67</sup> in Frankfurt and don't know yet if I will continue this work. As a makeshift solution with constant traveling back and forth there is much annoyance to this life. The most valuable aspect of it has been making some acquaintances, especially with the philologist Otto.<sup>68</sup>

Now we are about to go to Sylt for three weeks (Tinum near Westerland, at Mrs. Lindner's), where we will meet with the Gadamer. Gadamer was in Kiel on the same mission as I.

I have not been working much, unfortunately. In the winter, I want to work on the problem of time.—From Sylt, we will head to Berlin and Frankfurt an der Oder to see my parents. We will be back mid-September.



We are happy that Klein has at least now gotten *something*. I think he gains a whole new perspective after all on account of his work. It's just a shame that he lost so much time by waiting in the wrong place.

I am sending you an essay on Kant along with this letter.

With cordial greetings from our house to yours.

Yours,

G. Krüger.

### 37

26 Primrose Hill Road, London NW 3.  
London, 18 August 1934.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

I would like, first off, to thank you kindly for your letter and for sending along your Kant essay.<sup>69</sup> And I would ask you to please continue sending me your pieces. Let me only say this much in terms of the reason for my request: the writings of no other contemporary author—a category in which Klein cannot yet be counted—occupy me as much as yours do.

Your essay has strengthened my impression—and given my ignorance of Kant it cannot be more than an impression—that your interpretation gets much closer to the historical state of affairs than the three other interpretations that you discuss by way of introduction. And since you distinguish clearly between interpretation and critique, one can and need only argue about your critique of Kant and its direction. I “merely” have two concerns. First, I do not understand your striven-for leveling of the difference of faith and knowledge. I certainly understand that you would like to see the difference between faith and knowledge [Wissen] sublated [aufgehoben] into a “hoping knowledge” [*hoffenden Erkennen*] in order to make room for faith. But I believe that in some way or other you will have to account for this old distinction. And as concerns the attempt to make “hoping knowledge” the *fundamental* kind of knowledge (p. 170 sec. 2), I think there exists a weighty counter-instance in the fact that your theology has proceeded from Augustine to Thomas. Kant, by beginning with what can be *known* of life and of a right human life, and only from there reflecting on what is to be *believed*, follows Plato. It is thus, in any case, no entanglement [Befangenheit] in *modern* notions [Vorstellungen] that prevented him from taking the path that you take to be correct.

Secondly, I do not know if one can presuppose the difference between theoretical and practical knowledge as you do, following Kant. As important as this distinction is, it seems to me to be secondary. Practical knowledge is knowledge *of* a bindingness/an obligation [Verbindlichkeit] *on the basis of* a bindingness/an obligation. (I intentionally do not say: of the moral law on the basis of the moral law; for “law” διχῶς λέγεται.<sup>70</sup>) But more original [ursprünglicher] than bindingness/obligation is *what* is binding and only *assumes* the character of bindingness/obligation “for us humans.” Platonic philosophy is concerned with the knowledge of this ‘What’ that does not itself have the character of a law in the proper sense, and Kant takes account of this radical problem by recognizing the “*holy* will” (if only in a sense that is limited from the outset by the theological tradition). The question of the law first comes up in the context of the question of *applying* the measure to human beings. And it is only with respect to human beings that the difference between a knowledge that is commanded and a “merely” true knowledge makes any sense. Now, you will say that the knowledge of the measure can be the basis for philosophy as a *res humana* only in the form of a *practical* (commanded) knowledge. But I believe that this practical knowledge that originally *motivated* philosophy and brought it onto the right track is not the original *theme* of philosophy. Philosophy that is called upon [aufgerufene] through the law does not inquire about the law, but about the right order of human life and thus about the principle of order. But this question cannot turn into the natural-theological one if one does not want to become embroiled in the difficulties involved in a grounding of knowledge in belief; rather, it must be asked and answered in the manner of Plato’s critical philosophy.

I am writing as if we had conversed only yesterday, and am not taking into account the fact that these indications are perhaps comprehensible only to me. I will thus try to repeat the second objection in different terms. Kant’s entanglement in modern notions does not only show itself in the fact that he begins with the recognition and limitation of modern science, but even and especially in his anthropological-teleological-moral doctrine, even and precisely if one expresses it in its purest, most perfect form. Your sentence: “The methodological primacy of unbelief can assert itself because Kant views the moral canon of critique as an *imperative* that must first compel human beings to a proper [rechten] use of reason” (186 sec. 2) has a broader significance. Starting with the analysis of the perverse/wrong [verkehrt] or indifferent use of reason, of the perverse/wrong [verkehrt]

or indifferent life (i.e. the primary thematization of anthropology) is that which distinguishes modern morality as such from classical morality. (I readily acknowledge that in this respect Kant nevertheless comes closer to Plato than the other moderns.) It is the beginning from a perverse/wrong [verkehrt] state of nature (Hobbes) or indifferent state of nature (Rousseau), from an original freedom, that is only later restricted. It is identical to the increased interest in the affects [Affekte] that characterizes 17<sup>th</sup> century morality. Finally, it is identical to the philosophical interest in history that breaks through in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and that only becomes invisible for two generations because the “rationalistic” philosophy of the 17<sup>th</sup> century claims to have solved the problem, while it was classical philosophy’s leaving it “unsolved” that called forth the early philosophy of history: the problem, namely, of *applying* morality. Modern morality was conceived from the start as an *applicable* morality, and despite the incomparable radicalization that Kantian morality exhibits, I believe it is nonetheless specifically modern in this sense.

Perhaps this view would become clearer if I developed it in a coherent form. I am working on a developmental history of Hobbesian morality, for which I was able to dig up lots of material. I want it to precede my edition of Hobbes’ unpublished writings. Let’s hope I find a decent translator. I told you that I am morally certain that I have found Hobbes’ first work. The manuscript, titled “Essays,” is in any case extremely interesting. I also was able to dig up a draft and an early version of parts of *De corpore* and *De homine*. My Hobbes book will thus, of course, be delayed ad calendae Graecas.<sup>71</sup>

Farewell, and please write soon. It should be easier while you are on vacation.

Please send my and my wife’s greetings to your wife and the Gadammers.

Yours cordially,

Leo Strauss

### 38

38 Perne Road, Cambridge, 27 March 1935.

[postcard]

Dear Mr. Krüger,

Due to last year’s hustle and bustle I never got around to writing you, and even today I am just writing you to inform you that in the coming days

you will be receiving two copies of a brochure,<sup>72</sup> one of which is for you, the other for Gadamer. It would please me to learn both of your opinions sometime.

Have you completed anything in the meantime? I heard praise from Klein about a piece on Plato by Gadamer,<sup>73</sup> which I unfortunately haven't seen.

To avoid a possible misunderstanding: the term "sophistry" on the first page of my introduction is meant literally (after the Protagoras myth<sup>74</sup>): to submit to what the Athenians say on the basis of an Epimethean physics (the exposedness [Preisgegebenheit] of human beings.)

Farewell!

With cordial greetings from our house to yours, including the Gadamers.

Yours,

L Strauss.

P.S.: Could you get me Prof. E. Frank's<sup>75</sup> address? I would be much obliged.

### 39

38 Perne Road, Cambridge  
12 May 1935.

Dear Mr. Gadamer! Dear Mr. Krüger!

I am so pressed for time that I must take the liberty of writing this letter to you both instead of penning two more or less identical letters to each of you.

I must bother you with a very big request. In the meantime, I have completed my first work on Hobbes and am now looking for a publisher. I can only find an English publisher once the book is printed in Germany, since they don't like to translate from the manuscript here. Not to mention that I seriously doubt that the work admits of being translated! In my situation, everything depends on a work on Hobbes appearing in my name very soon. I am thus asking both of you to kindly help me yourselves or with the help of your friends to get the piece published somewhere in the German-speaking realm. I wouldn't be asking you if I didn't think the piece was worthy of being published. Since most authors would say the same of their writings, I can only dare to venture this judgment assuming that you have a certain trust in my self-criticism. In this sense I say that I consider this work superior to my earlier things.

The work is not identical to the one whose first chapters I showed you ages ago. Inspired by the study of Hobbes' unpublished works and the historical conditions of his appearance, I decided for the time being to just write a kind of developmental history of Hobbes' political science (which according to Hobbes' own use of language includes morality). I am giving it the title *Hobbes' Political Science In Its Genesis*. (To mention it up front: it is not long, at most 10 sheets.) It is divided into eight sections. In the very brief introduction, I first make the claim that the significance of Hobbes' politics is generally underestimated, and then show that this underestimation stems from an overestimation of the significance of mathematics and natural science for this politics, or from an underestimation of the originality of Hobbes' morality, to which Dilthey's proofs of "dependence" have contributed. In order to ascertain Hobbes' significance, one has to bring out the *attitude* [Gesinnung] that is decisive for him and *confront* it with the classical one and the biblical one respectively. The clarification of this attitude is the task of the 2<sup>nd</sup> section ("The Moral Foundations"), in which I show that Hobbes's guiding attitude is characterized by the fundamental antithesis vanity—fear of violent death. I develop the inner connection between the two sides of this antithesis, always emphasizing that this antithesis is intended morally and that Hobbes shies away and why he shies away from its moral understanding. The section concludes with the statement that this connection is in any case "prior" in terms of subject matter [sachlich früher] to the mathematical natural-scientific politics, and with the question of whether it is not also biographically prior (Hobbes was 40 years old when he encountered Euclid.) In case of the latter—which I show in what follows to be in fact the case—the more pressing question arises whether and how Hobbes' politics is not merely threatened by mathematics and natural science, but also on the other hand promoted by them. This is what motivates the study of Hobbes' politics in light of its development.—3<sup>rd</sup> section: "Aristotelianism". Hobbes' first period, antedating the knowledge of mathematics or natural science, is legitimately characterized as "humanistic" (as Dilthey does). I show that the philosophic authority for Hobbes at this time was Aristotle, more precisely Aristotle's politics, i.e. the *Ethics*, the *Politics*, and above all the *Rhetoric*. I then trace the influence that Aristotle exerts on the politics of the mature Hobbes, ascertaining through the confrontation of the texts that the central chapters of Hobbes' anthropology are nothing other than a free re-working of the pertinent parts of the *Rhetoric*. (It may interest you in this regard, Mr. Gadamer, that

Hobbes published two English excerpts of the *Rhetoric*—they are reprinted in the large edition of his works—, that there is a Latin excerpt among his unpublished works, that he explicitly exempted the *Rhetoric* from his summary condemnation of Aristotelian philosophy, and that—no one has drawn any conclusions from this.) 4<sup>th</sup> section: “virtue of the nobility” [Adelstugend]. The Aristotelianism of Hobbes’ youth is identified with the modification he underwent in the 16<sup>th</sup> century in Italy, among others through Castiglione, Niphus, Fr. Piccolomini (among Hobbes’ unpublished works, there is an excerpt from the *Nicomachean Ethics* that is based on Piccolomini). It is characteristic of this modification that the heroica virtus becomes of central importance. This is connected with the fact that heroic virtue is to replace Christian sanctitas. For my context the identification of heroica virtus with the virtue of the courtier, of the nobility, is decisive. From this standpoint, Hobbes’ analyses of “honour” are recognized as analyses of the virtue of nobility (the analyses of honor thus have two sources: 1) the analysis of the καλὰ in the *Rhetoric*; 2) the courtly literature [Adelsliteratur] of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.) Then I show that with the development of Hobbes’ doctrine the virtue of the nobility increasingly recedes into the background, although strangely enough, under the influence of Descartes, it takes center stage for a moment in the *Leviathan* (for this part your analyses of Descartes, Mr. Krüger, were very helpful.) The section concludes by indicating the significance that Hobbes’ moral Enlightenment of self-consciousness has for Hegel’s *Phenomenology* (it was my aim, in general, to show the deep connection between Hobbes and Hegel). Section 5 (“State and Religion”): a continuation of Tönnies’ developmental-historical research. Section 6 (“History”): Whereas the elements of Hobbes’ doctrine that I have treated up to now have been more or less traditional, the significance of history for Hobbes—first openly in his youth, then more tacitly in later years—is in principle revolutionary. There had been a fundamental shift toward history in political science in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Bodin, Patrizzi, lastly and preeminently Bacon), which I interpret by confronting it with the traditional place of history: history gains a central philosophical position because norms are not considered worthy of further discussion—the ancients did this well, as Bacon says—and all interest shifts to *application*. (This genesis of philosophical interest in history is still clearly visible in Hegel’s philosophy of history.) Human beings *don’t obey* commands [Vorschriften], and that is why one needs the study of history in order to develop the technique of realizing norms. This technique is to replace obedience (thus also the

newfound interest in the passions, etc.). This turn to history is “sublated” only in Hobbes’ later turn to “unhistorical,” “antihistorical,” or “rationalistic” politics. Its explicit opposition to traditional politics consists in its guaranteeing its own unconditional applicability; in other words, it satisfies the wish [Desiderat] that under the presupposition of traditional politics was delegated to history. It is for this reason, and only this reason, that Hobbes’ politics is “ahistorical.” The purpose of this section is to set forth the essentially historical character of modern politics by way of the doctrine of its founder, its presupposition being the decline of ancient cosmology (and Christian theology). Section 7 (“The New Morality”): I initially show that the basic moral view depicted in section 2 biographically precedes the turn to mathematics and natural science. I then show that this basic view is identical to a specifically bourgeois view (I have Hegel as my guarantor in this). Furthermore, I indicate that the presupposition of this morality is the same decline of cosmology and theology spoken of in the previous section as the presupposition of the historicization of philosophy. Section 8 (“The New Political Science”): The purpose of this final and longest section is to answer the question of what the Euclidian method means for Hobbes’ politics. At first, I indicate that, within certain limits, Hobbes’ attitude in his analyses of passions etc. should be presented through the style of the *Rhetoric*. This allows one to set up a confrontation between Hobbes’ anthropology and the *Rhetoric* (I had only shown the relationship of dependence in section 3), which provides a decisive confirmation of section 2’s conclusion. After this, I inquire into Euclid’s significance for Hobbes’ politics, i.e. into the sense of an “exact” politics. This leads to a fundamental confrontation between Hobbes’ politics and Plato’s: Plato is concerned with “exactitude” out of an interest in the unconditional [unbedingten] purity of the standard [Maßstab], whereas Hobbes’ interest lies in unconditional applicability. In conclusion, by formally referring to the *ἔνδοξα* via the relation of ancient and modern politics, I show the condition of the possibility of the specifically modern problem of sovereignty. This condition is the belief in the powerlessness [Ohnmacht] of reason, the necessary result of the decline of cosmology and theology, or in other words, the release [Freigabe] of the passions. (Aside from Hobbes, even Rousseau offers me the decisive proofs [Belege] of this.) A remark about the significance of modern natural science for Hobbes’ politics, which is to provide a link to a further investigation of Hobbes’ critique of religion, forms the conclusion.

I would like to add that the work does not suffer from the same formal deficiencies from which my Spinoza book suffered, which you, Mr. Krüger, so justifiably pointed out back then, and which I only tried to repair somewhat five years later in the introduction to my piece on Maimuni. I ask you in particular to believe me that the work is better and written more clearly than this letter, which to my regret I had to write directly on the typewriter.

Klein, who is now back in Berlin, has a copy of the first 7 sections. He is already trying to find a publisher. If you could join forces with him in his efforts this might be able to succeed.

I still have a special request for you, Mr. Gadamer. I heard about your work on Plato and the poets, I couldn't get a hold of it. Would you be willing to make it available to me, perhaps lend it to me, or send me the proofs? I would be very much obliged.

Again, I apologize for bothering you with such a huge request.

Many cordial greetings from our house to your houses.

Yours,

Leo Strauss.

## 40

Marburg, 2 June 1935.

Dear Mr. Strauss,

Once again, I must begin a letter to you with the request that you forgive my late reply and the seeming indifference regarding correspondence that I am unable to shake! The matter is all the worse in this case, as I got your piece on Maimonides that should really have prompted me to give an extensive reply. Unfortunately, I was so pressed for time during the semester that I have thus far only read the introduction. You have really expressed therein with the greatest clarity and decisiveness the secret guiding thoughts [*Leitgedanken*] of your earlier writings. I like the boldness of the presentation, especially the thesis on the origins of the modern idea of science (p. 23), for one can tell by your language that you have the sufficient background, that these aren't rash claims. In short: I am very happy that you bring to light the actual problem without the false modesty of the "modern" scholar. I agree with almost everything. The only small flaw I can find concerns a certain abruptness in the transition from Epicureanism to the Enlightenment with the "thus" (p. 25, l. 15 from the bottom).



What is the reason for the “essential change”? Would one not here need to say (corresponding to the section on “probity,” p. 27) that the Enlightenment has such “bad experiences” of man’s condition in nature *because* it has unlearned, on account of the biblical tradition, to find this world [das “Diesseits”] as such as unproblematic as Epicurus does? The “almost” with which I qualify my agreement refers to p. 20, where you claim that the presuppositions of orthodoxy are merely a matter of faith. Are you here not dogmatically taking as your measure [messen Sie da nicht] the *modern* idea of knowledge [Wissensidee]?

I am particularly interested in this point as I am presently giving a lecture course on “problems of the philosophical knowledge of God” [“Probleme der philosophischen Gotteserkenntnis”] in which I attempt to begin with “knowledge” [Wissen], to primarily reproduce the factual content [sachlichen Gehalt] of the proofs for God’s existence. It seems to me that this factual content is not only detachable from ancient cosmology, but indeed *must* be detached from it in order present itself free of “pagan” burdens. The derivation [Herkunft] of time out of eternity I therein take to be decisive. After all, that was the point of contention in the Middle Ages’ reception of Aristotle (the “eternity” of the world). However, I am experiencing how overwhelming the difficulties are in this endeavor. Yet I must make a *factual* [sachlichen] attempt, although the historical work would lead to more definitive results. In time, something perhaps will come of it.—

As concerns your letter to Gadamer and me, which makes us very excited for your book, I unfortunately have one initial failure to report: the publisher Klostermann from Frankfurt, who happened to be visiting at the time and who in principle would be a candidate, shied away from the matter, even though he seemed tempted by the praise for your work. About a year ago he might have been more inclined toward it. Now Gadamer has written to the “Runde,” the best prospect that one can probably find in this moment. If it fails, Frank would also be here, prepared to mediate with a publisher in Holland that prints German books. It will work out somehow. (Frank’s address, by the way, is: Marburg, Behringweg 7a. He would certainly be happy about a copy of your “Maimuni.”)

I don’t have much to report about my “authorship.” I am sending you my review of Hartmann’s second-to-last book. Unfortunately, due to the low number of offprints (10), I cannot send you my essay on “The Task of Hegel Research,” which essentially discusses literature on the topic. The first half of it has appeared in *Theologische Rundschau*, N. F. 7 (1935), issue 2.

We are thinking of going to Jade (Oldenburg) to visit Pastor Spitta after the semester is over. All in all, we are doing well. Our son is already almost 2  $\frac{3}{4}$  years old. Give us word of how you are faring personally!

Most cordial greetings from our house to yours.

Yours,

G. Krüger.

## 41

38 Perne Road, Cambridge, England

25 December 1935.

[draft of an unsent letter]

Dear Mr. Krüger,

It's again been six months since we last exchanged letters. I probably don't have to excuse my long silence. You will understand that I am very busy, and that I have to use the times during which my head is clear for sharp thinking to get myself out of the mess I have put myself in.

I must confirm that I received your review of Hartmann and thank you for it. It is obvious that you are completely in the right over against Hartmann: any speculative stance toward history should have become impossible since the 2<sup>nd</sup> *Untimely Meditation*.<sup>76</sup> On the other hand you will not be surprised to hear that I cannot completely agree with you. I am less convinced than ever that historicity as such is a philosophical problem. I have meanwhile familiarized myself a little with the beginnings of the philosophy of history in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, where the problem still appears in its ancient nakedness, and that has only strengthened my suspicions that first arose regarding Mannheim's idiocy (*Ideology and Utopia*). On the other hand, I concede far more than before that you are right regarding Kant: he really is the only Platonist among the modern philosophers. (By the way, Swift is a very odd and, for you, I believe, very important man—he opposed the entire modern development with incredible awareness.)

Now I want to tell you a bit about my work, in the hope and with the request that you might soon clarify for me your enigmatic allusions concerning time and creation. I have placed Hobbes on the back burner for now, in order to first gain clarity about the history of Platonism in the Islamic and Jewish middle ages. Farabi is astounding, ὁ ἀρχηγὸς τῆς τοιαύτης φιλοσοφίας.<sup>77</sup> Perhaps, in my initial joy of discovery, I overestimated him a bit. But there is enough that remains astounding about him.

Especially the perspective he opens on ancient—middle and new—Platonism. I am looking through late Neoplatonic commentaries and am surprised at the subtlety of the exegesis. It is an ocean I will have to delve into for a long time, and from which I hope to retrieve quite a bit for the understanding of Plato himself. It seems to me that the principle deficiencies of the traditional interpretation of Plato—also in today’s research—can be attributed to a large extent to the Christian tradition, thus making Islam a better point of departure from the start.

## 42

[Chicago] 21 June 1958.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

I was very glad to hear such good things from you through your book. <sup>78</sup> I immediately read it twice. I am very grateful to you for it. How close we are to one another in our questioning, and even in the general direction in which we seek the answer.

Your discussion of the difference between ancients and moderns was especially instructive and pleasing to me.

*Propter abbreviationem sermonis*, as it says in the translations of Averroes, I will limit myself to mentioning the claim of yours that I cannot agree with. Your critique of Heidegger (p. 219 especially) does not seem to cohere with what you admit on pp. 250–251: there, you seem to me to admit the necessity of distinguishing between the human being as an embodied-earthly being with his inadequate perspectives, and the human being as the wanderer simply who is on the way to *the* truth. A corresponding distinction would also seem to be necessary due to the essential tension between the ἀρίστη πολιτεία and the factual “natural community”—to say nothing of the fundamental difference between the highest πράξεις that is only θεωρία and all other πράξεις. If one takes this thought further, one arrives, among other things, at the opposition between Thomas, whose theologia (in contradistinction to his philosophia) is *also* practical (in the narrower sense) and *therefore* bound to community (ecclesiastical), and “Averroes.”

The difference concerning “natural communities” is, I think, decisive. Their “naturalness” is ambiguous, since only ἀρίστη πολιτεία is natural in the strict sense (cf. the problem of ἀγαθὸς ἀνὴρ in distinction from ἀγαθὸς πολίτης in *Politics* III). To express the matter in the extreme Platonic

term: the πόλις is the cave. There is a necessary tension between the πόλις and philosophy (hence even the ἀρίστη πολιτεία is in need of the καλὸν ψεῦδος). The problem is veiled but not solved if one replaces the πόλις with the ἔθνος, and thereby risks making the dependency of thought on language absolute. If that is correct, then it follows that the status of sensuality/the senses [Sinnlichkeit] is a different one than that of the natural communities. As concerns sensuality/the senses (Sinnlichkeit), I don't see how they can be separated from earthliness [Irdischkeit].

Since I last saw you, I have written a book on Machiavelli, who is probably the first who explicitly broke with ancient thought. The book is slated to appear in August. I will take the liberty of sending you a copy. Now, I want to begin a series of studies on Socrates, first studying more closely probably Aristophanes' comedy in general and *The Clouds* in particular.

I was especially glad to read, in your book's Preface, the good news about how you are doing.

Cordial greetings from both of us to both of you.

Yours with devotion,

Leo Strauss.

## 43

[Chicago] 29 January 1962.

[The letter is in English in the original.]

Dear Mr. Krüger:

I have your letter of January 20. Forgive me for my replying to you in English but my handwriting is not easily legible and the lady who takes down my dictation does not have an easy command of German.

I was very happy to learn that you are much better. I hope that your recovery will continue.

I can think only of three men whom your son might profitably visit in Israel. All three are at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem: Professor Solomon Pines<sup>79</sup> (medieval Jewish and Arabic philosophy), Professor Ernst Simon<sup>80</sup> (the author of *Ranke and Hegel*, professor of education), and last but not least Professor G. G. Sholem<sup>81</sup> (Jewish mysticism).

Dr. Oehler<sup>82</sup> has written to me and told me that he is going to visit me in the near future.

I am reasonably well. I plan to write a book on Socrates. Klein has completed a book on Plato, centered around the *Meno*.<sup>83</sup>

With kindest regards to both of you from both of us.

As ever yours,

Leo Strauss

#### 44

[Heidelberg] 28 July 1962.

Dear Mr. Strauss,

It's been a while now since I heard with joy that you submitted a contribution to the *Festschrift* for my 60<sup>th</sup> birthday.<sup>84</sup> I am very excited to learn what your topic is and thank you kindly for this sign of our bond. Thank you also for the letter that you wrote for me on behalf of my son.

Cordially,

Yours,

G. Krüger

#### 45

[Chicago] 6 August 1962.

[The letter is in English in the original.]

Dear Mr. Krueger:

I was very happy to hear from you. I cannot write to you in German because of the decay of my handwriting and because the lady who takes down this dictation does not have an easy command of German. I was very happy to be able to contribute something to your *Festschrift*. I could not write anything new because it is no longer easy for me to write essays in German. I had an unpublished essay in German, written about twenty-five years ago, which to my surprise seemed to be most appropriate for the occasion, as I remember from some conversations which we had around 1930.

With kindest regard from both of us to both of you.

Sincerely yours,

Leo Strauss

[Chicago] 12 September 1962.

[The letter is in English in the original.]

Dear Mr. Krüger:

It was extremely good of you to write to me about my contribution to the *Festschrift*. I thought that it was fitting for the purpose because of your deep interest in Leibniz. I regret that by a grave error of the publisher the error was created that the article had been published before: it was written in 1936 for Volume IIIb of the Jubilee edition of Mendelssohn's works, and the volume could no longer appear because of the situation of the time.

About ten days ago your former student Oehler visited me. I am very happy to have made his acquaintance. We had an amazingly good understanding regarding the philosophical problems, the right procedure in historical studies and regarding human beings. I was glad to see that there still exists a bridge between people like me and young Germans. You surely can be proud of such a student. Let us hope that he will not be buried by Byzantine manuscripts.

With kindest regards from both of us to both of you.

As ever yours,

Leo Strauss

## NOTES

1. Exclamation points—a conventional alternative at the time for ending salutations—have been changed to commas.
2. Johannes Nikolaus Tetens, 1736–1807, German-Danish philosopher, statistician and scientist.
3. Felix Günther wrote his dissertation in the philosophy department at Leipzig in 1906.
4. Karl Gotthard Lamprecht, 1856–1915, German professor of history and political science at Marburg and Leipzig.
5. Franz Rosenzweig, 1886–1929, influential German-Jewish theologian and philosopher. Rosenzweig studied philosophy and history at the universities of Göttingen, Munich, and Freiburg. In his magnum opus, the *Star of Redemption* (first published 1921), he expounded an influential existentialist philosophy of Judaism. Strauss's book on Spinoza is dedicated to Rosenzweig's memory.

6. Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, Part II: Introduction, 'On the Possibility of Experiencing Miracles.'
7. Strauss's review, under this title, of Karl Mannheim's *Ideologie und Utopie*, originally published in 1929, is reprinted in vol. II of Strauss' *Gesammelte Schriften*. An English translation appears in *Reorientation: Leo Strauss in the 1930's*.
8. Friedrich Gogarten, 1887–1967, a German Lutheran theologian and professor of systematic theology at Jena, and a co-founder, together with Karl Barth, of the "dialectical theology" movement in Germany.
9. Hermann Cohen, 1842–1918, an important German-Jewish philosopher and co-founder of the Marburg school of neo-Kantianism that dominated German academic philosophy from the 1870s to the First World War.
10. Jacob Klein, born in 1899 in Libava, Russia, died 1978 in Annapolis, Maryland. A commentator on Plato and close friend of Strauss, Klein studied under Husserl and Heidegger. After fleeing Germany, he taught at St. John's College, Annapolis, until his death.
11. Paul Johannes Tillich, 1886–1965, a widely influential German American Christian existentialist philosopher and theologian, and a vocal opponent of the Nazis.
12. Julius Ebbinghaus, 1885–1981, a German neo-Kantian philosopher who studied under Husserl and later served as Rector of the University of Marburg under the American occupation.
13. Paul Hünneberg, 1862–1934, a German legal theorist, historian and publisher.
14. Literally, "winning of good will," a rhetorical technique that consists in gaining favor with one's audience by praising them in advance.
15. Theodor W. Adorno, born 1903 Theodor Ludwig Wiesengrund, died 1969. German philosopher, sociologist, composer and co-founder of the Frankfurt school of "critical theory." Of Jewish descent on his father's side, Adorno fled Germany, living first in England and later settling in the US, but returning to Germany in 1949.
16. Karl Mannheim, born Károly Manheim in 1893 in Hungary, died 1947 in London. A sociologist and a leader in the school of thought known as the "sociology of knowledge." He fled Germany in 1933 and lived in London until his death in 1969. His most famous work is *Ideology and Utopia* [*Ideologie und Utopie*] (1929); tr. Louis Wirth and Edward Shils, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, (Harcourt, San Diego: 1955).
17. Max Horkheimer, 1895–1973, German Jewish philosopher, sociologist, and co-founder, along with Adorno, of the Frankfurt School of critical theory.

18. Hans-Georg Gadamer, 1900–2002, German philosopher and author of *Truth and Method* (1960). Gadamer studied under Husserl and Heidegger, whose thought influenced his later work. He is known for developing the concept of “philosophical hermeneutics.”
19. Karl Löwith, 1897–1973, German philosopher and intellectual historian. A protestant of Jewish descent, Löwith studied under Husserl and Heidegger, leaving Germany in 1934 for Italy, Japan and finally the US, where he continued to publish.
20. Erich Frank, 1883–1949, a German historian of philosophy and religion. Briefly imprisoned in a concentration camp, he later emigrated to the US and ended his career at the University of Pennsylvania.
21. Wilhelm Dilthey, 1833–1911, a prominent German hermeneutic philosopher, taught philosophy at the University of Berlin. His notion of the “life nexus” influenced Husserl’s understanding of the “life-world.”
22. Stanislaus von Dunin-Borkowski, 1864–1934, was an Austrian Jesuit priest and historian especially known for his work on Spinoza.
23. Karl Barth, 1886–1968, a Swiss Reformed theologian and co-founder of the “neo-orthodox” movement. A vocal opponent of the Nazis, he is generally regarded as one of the greatest Protestant theologians of the twentieth century.
24. Julius Ebbinghaus, *Philosophie und Geschichte*, Vol. 32, “Über die Fortschritte der Metaphysik” (Tübingen, J.C.B Mohr: 1931).
25. See note 26 below.
26. Review of “Über die Fortschritte der Metaphysik,” by Julius Ebbinghaus, *Deutsche Literaturzeitung*, Vol. 52 (December 27, 1931). Reprinted in *Gesammelte Schriften: Band 2*, and (in English) in *Leo Strauss: The Early Writings*, ed. Michael Zank (New York: SUNY Press, 2002).
27. Heinz Heimsoeth, 1886–1975, German historian of philosophy. After studying with Wilhelm Dilthey, Hermann Cohen others, Heimsoeth taught at Königsberg and Cologne. He joined the Nazi party in 1933 and was named faculty dean, retiring in 1954.
28. Nicolai Hartmann, 1882–1950, an early critic of neo-Kantianism and representative of the “critical realism” school.
29. *Being and Time*, II.5.77 [397–404].
30. Martin Heidegger, SZ 312. “Indirect communication” is a term especially associated with Kierkegaard.
31. Theodor Haecker, 1879–1945, German writer, critic, and Kierkegaard scholar. Haecker was a convert to Catholicism and an opponent of the Nazis.
32. Carl Schmitt, 1888–1985, a German jurist and highly influential political theorist. Schmitt’s most widely read works include *The Concept of the Political* and *Political Theology*. Schmitt joined the Nazi Party in 1933.



Later falling into disfavor, he resigned his official party position in 1936 but continued to hold his professorship in Berlin. After the war, he was briefly imprisoned by the occupation forces, refused de-nazification, and continued his studies without an official academic appointment until his death.

33. “to give and receive” [reasons]; cf. Plato, *Republic* 531e.
34. Ralph Cudworth, 1617–1688, English philosopher, and a leading figure among the Cambridge Platonists.
35. William Wollaston, 1659–1724, an English Enlightenment philosopher and expositor of theism.
36. Samuel Clarke, 1675–1729, an English philosopher and famous correspondent of Leibniz.
37. Albert Curtz, a.k.a. Albertus Curtius, 1600–1671, a German Jesuit astronomer.
38. Juan Donoso Cortés, marqués de Valdegamas, 1809–1853, Spanish conservative, political theorist and diplomat.
39. Hedwig Courths-Mahler, 1867–1950, a German author of romantic novels.
40. André Siegfried, 1875–1959, a French geographer and political author.
41. Louis Massignon, 1883–1962, a Catholic scholar of Islam and prominent proponent of Catholic-Muslim mutual understanding.
42. Cf. *Genealogy of Morals*, III.3.
43. An allusion to Jacobi’s famous quip that without the presupposition of the “thing in itself” he couldn’t enter Kant’s philosophic system, and that with it he couldn’t remain there.
44. cf. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Introduction.
45. Cf. “indifferentism” – the view, traditionally deemed “heretical” by the Catholic Church, that all religions are equally adequate for salvation so long as one acts morally.
46. Cf. Horace, *First Book of Epistles*, 8: 84: “It concerns you when your neighbor’s wall is on fire.”
47. Lit: “second sailing”; cf. Plato, *Phaedo* 99c–d.
48. Plato, *Protagoras* 320c–323a.
49. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, 1646–1717, major German philosopher and one of the outstanding mathematical and philosophical minds of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.
50. Lucien Laberthonnière, 1860–1932, French priest and historian of philosophy.
51. A reference to the well-known poem “The Impossible Fact,” by Christian Morgenstern (1871–1914).
52. Leo Strauss, “Einige Anmerkungen über die politische Wissenschaft des Hobbes,” in GS 3, 243–261; reviewing Zbigniew Lubiński, *Die Grundlagen des ethisch-politischen Systems von Hobbes* (Munich: Reinhardt, 1932).

53. Richard Krautheimer, 1897–1994, German Jewish art historian and Byzantinist. He taught at Marburg until fleeing Germany in 1933 and eventually settling in the US, where he taught at NYU.
54. See Leo Strauss, , *Hobbes' Critique of Religion and Other Writings*, tr. Gabriel Bartlett & Svetozar Minkov (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), pp. 21–118.
55. See *Psalm* 1:1.
56. A German Evangelical movement that allied itself with the Nazis.
57. A reference to Ernst Cassirer, who was resident at Oxford at the time.
58. Hans Heinrich Schaefer, 1896–1957, a German Iranologist who taught at the University of Berlin (from 1931), and later University of Göttingen (1946–1957).
59. Leo Strauss, tr. Fred Baumann, *Philosophy and Law: Essays Toward the Understanding of Maimonides and His Predecessors*, (New York, Jewish Publication Society: 1987) pp. 21–58.
60. Victor Brochard (1848–1907), professor of ancient philosophy at the Sorbonne. Strauss may here be referring to Brochard's *Les Sceptiques Grecs*, second edition (Paris, 1932; originally published Paris: Vrin, 1887). Nietzsche, who praises Brochard in *Ecce Homo* ("Why I am so Clever"), evidently owned a copy of the work.
61. Simon Rawidowicz, 1897–1957, Polish-born, German-educated, American Jewish philosopher and anti-Zionist. He spent the final years of his career in the Department of Near-Eastern and Judaic Studies at Brandeis University.
62. Heinrich Maier, 1867–1933, German neo-Kantian philosopher, who taught at Göttingen until 1911 and subsequently at Heidelberg from 1918.
63. Martin Buber, 1878–1965, an influential Austrian-Israeli philosopher. His most famous book, *I and Thou* (1923) offers an existentialist philosophy of religious experience. He taught at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem from 1938 onward.
64. A meatloaf made without pork.
65. Rudolf Karl Bultmann, 1884–1976, a German Lutheran theologian and professor of New Testament at the University of Marburg, and a prominent liberal existentialist Christian who was influenced by Heidegger.
66. Gerhard Krüger, "Die Herkunft des philosophischen Selbstbewußtseins," in *Logos*, Vol. 22, 1933; republished by Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft (Darmstadt, 1962).
67. Richard Kroner, 1884–1974, German neo-Hegelian philosopher. Kroner ended his career at the Union Theological Seminary in New York.
68. Walter Friedrich Gustav Hermann Otto, 1874–1958, German classical philologist and scholar of Greek religion and mythology.

69. “Der Maßstab der Kantischen Kritik,” *Kantstudien*, (Pan-Verlag, Berlin: 1934).
70. “is said in two ways.” Cf. Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, 1217a, 36.
71. Proverbial for “never.” Cf. Kant, *Toward Perpetual Peace* [8: 347].
72. Possibly a reference to his “Maimuni’s Lehre von der Prophetie und ihre Quellen,” *Le Monde Oriental* (Uppsala), 28, 1934 (recte 1935), 99–139.
73. Possibly the essay “Plato und die Dichter” (1934), reprinted in *Platos dialektische Ethik: Phänomenologische Interpretationen zum Philebus*, (Felix Meiner Verlag, Hamburg: 1968) pp. 181–204. Translated in Hans-Georg Gadamer, tr. P. Christopher Smith, *Dialogue and Dialectic: Eight Hermeneutical Studies on Plato*, (New Haven, Yale Press: 1980).
74. See note 47.
75. Erich Frank (1883–1949), a German existentialist philosopher, Frank assumed Heidegger’s position at the University of Marburg, remaining there until forced to resign under the Nazis. Frank ended his career at Harvard and the University of Pennsylvania.
76. Friedrich Nietzsche, “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life,” in *Untimely Meditations*, tr. R. J. Hollingdale, (Cambridge Press, Cambridge: 1997), pp. 57–124.
77. See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 983b; the reference is to Thales.
78. Gerhard Krüger, *Freiheit und Weltverwaltung: Aufsätze zur Philosophie der Geschichte*, (Alber, Freiburg: 1958).
79. Shlomo Pines, 1908–1990, Israeli scholar of Jewish and Islamic medieval philosophy and author of an English translation of Maimonides’ *Guide of the Perplexed*. Pines was born in France, and studied philosophy, Semitic languages, and linguistics at the universities of Heidelberg, Geneva and Berlin. In 1940 he emigrated to British Palestine, later serving as professor in the Department of Jewish Thought and the Department of Philosophy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem from 1952 until his death in 1990.
80. Ernst (Akiva) Simon, 1900–1998, an German-Israeli educator and religious philosopher. After serving in the German army during World War I, Simon became a Zionist and student of Franz Rosenzeig following encounters with anti-semitism. He moved to British Palestine in 1928 and became a lecturer in Theology and Philosophy at the Hebrew University. In 1950 he was appointed professor of the History of Philosophy of Education at Hebrew University. He was a prominent left-wing Zionist, founding the peace organization ‘Brit Shalom’ in the 1920s along with Martin Buber and cofounding the binationalist *Ihud* party in 1942. In 1967 he was awarded the Israel Prize for Education.
81. Gershom (Gerhard) Scholem, 1897–1982, a German-born Israeli philosopher and scholar of Jewish mysticism. Following the early influence of Martin Buber, he emigrated to British Palestine in 1923, working as a

librarian and lecturer until his appointment in 1933 as the first Professor of Jewish Mysticism at Hebrew University. He is widely regarded as the founder of the modern, academic study of Kabbalah. His most influential work is *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (1941), dedicated to his friend Walter Benjamin. His wide influence extended to Jorge Luis Borges, Umberto Eco, Jacques Derrida, Harold Bloom, and George Steiner.

82. Klaus Oehler, 1928–, German philosopher and professor emeritus at Hamburg University. Oehler studied philosophy, classical philology and evangelical theology, completing his dissertation at Tübingen under Gerhard Krüger. He was appointed ordinary professor at Hamburg in 1968 and was a public opponent of the 1968 student movement. His best known work treated Aristotle, Pragmatism and semiotics.
83. Jacob Klein, *A Commentary on Plato's Meno*, (University of Chicago Press, Chicago: 1965).
84. Einsichten: Gerhard Krüger zum 60. Geburtstag, (Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt: 1962). Strauss's essay was later published in volume 3 of the Jubilee Edition of Mendelssohn's work and in Strauss, GS, pp. 514–27; for an English translation see "Introduction to *God's Cause, or Providence Vindicated*," in *Leo Strauss on Moses Mendelssohn*, ed. Martin D. Yaffe (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), pp. 146–161.